BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

THE CALL OF THE VEDAS

BY

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BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHAUPATTY, BOMBAY

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages : Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu. Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit :

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities ; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the framework of the Moral Order ; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI:
3rd October 1951.

K. M. MUNSHI

PREFACE

The Upanishads have rightly attracted wide attention but the Vedas which are admittedly their sources have been treated more or less as sealed books. It is true that portions of them are difficult to interpret and have caused divergence of opinion, but fortunately there is much in them that does not present any great difficulty. I have limited this anthology to such verses in the Vedas as have caused no serious difference of opinion, in respect of interpretation, between the orthodox scholars and the orientalists. To be on safe ground I have adopted the oriental scholars, western and Indian, as my authority and my translation is based on their work. I have, however, attempted to keep the translation as close to the original as possible, often rendering line for line and word for word.

I have given a title to every *mantra* quoted and a commentary of my own. In writing the commentary my aim has been to indicate the poetical and spiritual content of the *mantras*. In finding their spiritual and religious significance I have drawn upon Indian sources, including the work of Indian spiritual leaders. I have not followed the orientalists in their anthropological approach to the Vedas. My commentary, however, contains material that may interest the student of comparative religion.

In quoting the Vedas I have, as a rule, taken the *mantra* as the unit. For this I have my support in the Vedas themselves. The later Vedas frequently quote single *mantras* from the earlier. The Upanishads also follow the same method. In fact, when, after going through hundreds of verses, I selected a gem, thinking it was a fresh discovery on my part, I often found to my great surprise that my attempt had been forestalled millenniums ago by one of the Upanishads. But my surprise was not altogether unpleasant because it gave me considerable satisfaction to find that my choice had the confirmation of such high authority

I have also followed the Vedic practice of repeating a *mantra* in different contexts.

As the anthology is meant for the general reader, the Vedic text has been printed without the usual accent marks. Again, for the convenience of the general reader, I have, without breaking up the *sandhi*, separated combined words by the free use of the *virama* sign, to make the constituent words stand out clearly. This makes no difference in the pronunciation. For example, बृहदृतमुग्रम् has been printed बृहद् ऋतम् उग्रम्. For the same reason, in transliteration I have partially departed from the international system.

I have grouped the *mantras* selected by me under different sections, representing different spiritual attitudes, in the manner of the *Bhagavad Gita*. In keeping with the spirit of the Vedas, I have placed Karma-yoga last, and have devoted much space to Vibhuti-yoga, the Path of Splendour, which in my opinion is most characteristic of the Vedas, with their poetic approach to the Divine.

In the fairly long Introduction I have attempted to view the Vedic religion in the historical perspective, to define its spiritual attitude and to study some of its more salient aspects.

While presenting my book to the public I record my obligation to the Vedic scholars, eastern and western, whose work I have frequently consulted and accepted as my guide, as well to the learned friends who have helped me with their advice. Portions of the Introduction were published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

I am very grateful to Shri K. M. Munshi and the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for the inclusion of this book in the Bhavan's Book University.

A. C. BOSE

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I am happy to find that this book has served to create some fresh interest in our immortal heritage,-the Vedas. I again thank my learned friends who have helped me with further suggestions. I also thank those who by their critical estimate of my work have given me much encouragement.

Two indexes have been added to the book to facilitate reference.

DELHI,
OCTOBER 25, 1960.

A. C. BOSE

ABBREVIATIONS

R.X. 121.1—Rigveda, Mandala 10, Sukta 121, Mantra No. 1.

Y.VS. 13.4—Yajurveda, Vajaseniya Samhita, Chapter 13, Mantra No. 4.

S. 372—Samaveda, Mantra No. 372.

A. IV 2.7—Atharvaveda, Kanda 4, Sukta 2, Mantra No. 7.

Kath. Up.—Kathopanishad.

Mah. Up.—Mahanarayanopanishad.

Mund. Up.—Mundakopanishad.

Śvet. Up.—Śvetaśvataropanishad.

Tait. Up.—Taittiriyaopanishad.

B.G.—Bhagavad Gita.

ऋ. १०।१२१।१—ऋग्वेद, दशम मण्डल, सूक्त १२१, मंत्र १

य, (वा) १३।४—यजुर्वेद, वाजसेनीय संहिता, अध्याय १३, मंत्र ४

सा. ३७२—सामवेद, मंत्र ३७२

अ. ४।२।७—अथर्ववेद, कांड ४, सूक्त २, मंत्र ७

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I. The Poetry of the Vedas

The *Vedas* are four in number—the *Rig Veda*, consisting of 10,552 mantras (stanzas), the *Sama Veda*, of 1.875, the *Yajur Veda* (the Vajaseniya Samhita text), of 1,975 (some of the mantras being in prose) and the *Atharva Veda*, of 5,987 (a few of them in prose). In all, the Vedic Samhitas (collection of the texts, as distinguished from the literature based on the Vedas—*Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads*, etc.) consist of 20,389 mantras These, however, include repetitions, specially of a number of Rig Vedic verses in the other Vedas.

The first thing to note about the Vedas is that they are in the form of poetry, except for some prose passages, which, again, are what is called rhythmic prose. The Vedas contain the earliest recorded poetry and prose literature of the human race.

The religion and culture of the Hindus are rooted in the Vedas which no specialist, either eastern or western. has placed much later than 1500 B.C. Some have placed them very much earlier.

It is usual to describe Vedic poetry as primitive. If, by 'primitive poetry' is meant tribal song or folk ballad, then nothing could be farther from the fact. No primitive poet ever sang :

> Thought was the pillow of her couch,
> sight was the unguent of her eyes.
>
> (*R.* X. 85.7)[1]

If we should call Vedic poetry primitive, we should do so with reference to its pristine purity and its freedom from the *malaise* of the later civilisation. (Our people have got a better name for the Vedic age—Satya

1. No. 231.

Yuga, the Age of Truth). It takes life in its fullness, no maladjustment being caused by the loss of balance between the primary biological instincts (search for food, fighting for safety, conjugal love), or between the active and contemplative faculties of the mind (a perfect harmony between *brahman*, spiritual power, and *kshatra*, political power, being sought)[1] or between matter and spirit. We do not find in the Vedas any evidence of the tragedy of the divided soul, and the anguish and misery that accompany it, nor even the oppressive sense of cosmic tragedy with the profound melancholy induced by it (as we find among the Greeks). Nor do we come across signs of repression or self-torture, accompanied by morbid sin-consciousness, sometimes found to be acutely felt among followers of the Hebraic religions. No negative attitude, induced by disillusionment or frustration, as found in Buddhistic and post-Buddhistic sects in India itself, no world-weariness, is in evidence in the Veda. Vedic sages are positive in their acceptance of life and death and life's struggles and imperfections; positive, too, in their acceptance of the ultimate values—of truth, goodness, beauty—and of Eternal Law (*Rita*), and the Ultimate Reality. They are intensely religious, in the sense of feeling the living Presence of the Divine in the beauty and glory of the universe (*Vibhuti yoga*), of finding in their souls the strong urge of love and giving an adequate expression to it in terms of song. Vedic poetry came out of a joyous and radiant spirit, overflowing with love of life and energy for action, and looking up with serene faith to the Divinity for support and inspiration. Because the Vedic sages loved life as well as God, every wish of theirs for the good things of the earth took the form of an ardent prayer. And the prayer often took the form of song which tried to reach 'the supreme Lover of song'. (*R.* I. 10.12).[2] The sages, including women among them, placed themselves under the discipline of *Satya* (Truth) and *Ṛita* (Eternal

1. See No. 270.
2. No. 24.

Order) as well as of *Tapas* (spiritual ardour, superseding animal life). They were pure (*śuci*) in their mental make-up, dedicated to a pure way of life (*śuci-vrata*) and were transported by spiritual exaltation and what they accepted as divine inspiration. Their word (*Väk*) was, for them, a revelation in their souls of the inner truth of reality, which they creatively received.

> The first and foremost speech, O Brihaspati,
> that sages sent, giving names (to their visions),
> Speech that was their best, was stainless—
> it revealed with love the Divine Mystery within them.
>
> And where they created the Word, sifting it with the spirit,
> as they sift the flour with the sieve,
> Therein have friends discovered their friendships
> of which the beauties lie hidden in the Word.
>
> (*R.* X. 71.1.2)[1]

In their purity, austerity and power, the Vedic hymns have appeared to me like fresh, clear streams gushing out of a rocky mountain. But this analogy of mine has been anticipated by the Vedic sage himself :

> giri-bhrajo normayo madanto
> Brihaspatim avyarkä anävan—
>
> Like joyous streams bursting from the mountain
> Our songs have sounded to Brihaspati.
>
> (*R.* X. 68.1)[2]

The Vedic language is marked by extreme economy of expression. It is often compact to the extent of being cryptic. And one frequently feels that more is meant than meets the ear. The beautiful pictures of life and nature seem to carry some deep, hidden meaning. The term *guhä-hita* or *guhä-nihita* has often been used in the Vedas to indicate a mystical truth. The very sound often makes a deep, symbolic impression. The wise men of India, from the immediate successors of the Vedic sages right down to our times, have searched for and

1. No. 94.
2. Under No. 11.

discovered the revelation of the deepest spiritual truth in the Vedas.

The visions of the beauty of life and nature in the Vedas are extremely rich in poetic value. Perhaps nowhere else in the world has the glory of dawn and sunrise and the silence and sweetness of nature, received such rich and at the same time such pure expression. The beauty of woman has been most tenderly delineated. It has been said (by Anatole France) that the smile on the woman's face marked a new step in human evolution. The Vedas speak of 'gracious, smiling women' (kalyänyah smayamänäsah yoshäh)[1]; and in Ushas, with the beauty of a youthful woman in her, they find the perfect smile (samsmayamänä).[2] They regard the love of man and wife and the motherhood of woman with a profound sense of sanctity. Life's little things are invested with holiness and living appears to be a grand ritual.

It is remarkable that their romantic enthusiasm for life is kept under control by a classic sense of proportion and a realistic sense of probability. While in the post-Vedic literature men are supposed to live thousands of years, the Vedas set the limit at a hundred years and a little more, if possible. This most ancient poetry of the world has kept clear of the wild excesses of the mythmaking imagination which characterise later ages. Their pictures, however symbolical, remain close to life.

The Vedic metres, as meticulously knitted as the sonnet or the ode, have a powerful musical effect. It is interesting to note that the earliest of the Vedas, the *Rig Veda*, has more highly integrated metres than the later ones. Here at any rate the theory of progress does not apply. Some of the grand refrains like—

Kasmai deväya havishä vidhema[3]

Who is the Deity we shall adore with our oblation ?

1. R. IV. 58.8.
2. No. 110.
3. Nos. 1, 89.

Mahad devänäm asuratvam ekam[1]

Great is the single divinity of Gods,

or

Brihad vadema vidathe suvîräh

Loud may we speak with brave men in assembly,

carry an irresistible rhythmic appeal, not commonly met with in literature.

The *Sama Veda* gives a musical rendering to a selection of Rigvedic verses (having only 75 original mantras of its own).

The musical accompaniment to Vedic poetry is also notable. The *Yajur Veda* distinguishes between different musical instruments :

sabdäy ädambaräghätam mahase vînävädam.

For sound, the beater on the kettle-drum ; for sublimity, the vina-player.

(Y. V. XXX. 19.)

Surely people with such delicate sense of poetic and musical values occupied a much higher place in the human scale than our primitive brethren do.

Shakespeare who wrote without knowing the Vedas :

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety—

could be charged with plagiarism, for, in the *Rig Veda* we find :

Na yaṁ jaranti śarado na masa na dyava

Indram avakarśayanti.[2]

(*R.* VI 24.7.)

Years do not age Him, nor months nor days
wear out Indra.

1. Nos. 161, 162.
2. No. 125.

If great poetry is the combination of what have been called 'the emphasis of sound' and 'the emphasis of sense,' if it unites imagery and melody into a complete whole, then there is no truer or greater poetry than we find in the finest of the Vedic verses. In English literature, only the noblest passages in Shakespeare and Milton, for example, can be cited as a parallel to the best of the Vedic hymns, in respect of the spontaneity of expression, the power and sweep of rhythm and the subtlety and solemnity of effect. If sublimity is the echo of a great soul, certainly the Vedic poet had a greater soul than is found lodging in the primitive man.

It is surprising to find that the Vedic sages were quite confident about the future of their poetry. Two personified Rivers, addressing a sage-poet, say :

etad vaco jaritar mäpi mrishthä
ä yat te ghoshän uttarā yugāni

Forget not, Singer ! this word of thine,
which after-ages will resound.

(*R.* III 33.8)[1]

The words of the Vedas have been resounded through at least three and a half millenniums, and we should expect them to be resounded for many more.

II. Some Facts about the Vedic Religion

Except for certain non-conformist cults, all religious denominations in the different ages in India have recognised the Vedas as the supreme authority. Not only this, but the texts of the four Vedic Samhitas have been regarded as the most precious religious documents from the earliest times onwards and for the last three thousand and five hundred years and more, have been handed down by oral tradition—a feat unequalled in the history of the human race. The same attention has not been paid to the Upanishads or the Epics or the works of Sanskrit classical writers.

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1. No. 166.

Equally surprising is the fact that the Vedic religion should have survived through these thousands of years in spite of great social and political upheavals and terrific onslaughts on it from age to age. A consideration of these onslaughts and of the reaction of the religion to them may throw some light on its inner power. The following are the more important religious onslaughts .

The Buddhist Impact : The first great impact was that of Buddhism, a non-conformist sect of the Vedic religion which arose in the 6th century B.C. It persuaded about one-half of India to accept the original religion in a restricted ethical sense, by renouncing ritual and metaphysics. But within a few centuries India absorbed the new sect into the parent body and little trace of Buddhism as an independent religion was left in this country. In doing so it adopted many of the new attractive features of Buddhism, like temples, image-worship etc. as also some of the ethical points, like the emphasis on non-violence. Hinduism (as the Vedic religion, nationalised among the people of India, has come to be called) had adopted the theory of 'avatāras' or divine incarnations and according to that Buddha himself was accepted as the ninth in a line of ten 'avatāras.'

The Muslim Onslaught : Muslim sailors from Arabia were settled in Malabar by the Hindu king there in very early Muslim times. Arabs invaded and conquered Sind in 711. But they could not proceed further and never reappeared as invaders. Other Muslim invaders came in the 11th century and later and a large part of the Indian sub-continent was almost wholly under Muslim rule for 500 years or so. But the Muslim Power that had conquered and converted, almost to a man, great countries like Persia, Turkey, Egypt, Afghanistan and parts of Europe, could affect the religion of the Hindus very little indeed ; for after so many centuries, the Muslims, including later converts, do not form even one-

fourth of the population of the sub-continent to-day. At the end of their palmy days, early in the 18th century, before new tracts like East Bengal provided numerous converts from the submerged classes, including unassimilated Buddhists, the Muslim percentage must have been at the most a third of what it is now—*i.e.* about 8, including foreign immigrants. Hinduism preserved itself almost miraculously against the military, social and economic pressure exerted by Islam. The Vedas were preserved against the vandalism of all times by being handed down through oral tradition. Great saints arose who established religious sects (Vaishnavite and Saivite) that were democratic in character and carried a mass appeal through the cult of devotion (*bhakti*). And Indian womanhood distinguished itself by great loyalty in the face of terrible defeat and destruction.

The Christian Onslaught : Shortly after the passing away of the founder of Christianity, missionaries were at work in different parts of Europe, and everywhere the new religion entirely supplanted the old. The worship of Odin and the religion of Druids as well as Greek and Roman Paganism became completely extinct, everybody having changed over to Christianity. To India there came an Apostle, St. Thomas, in the first century and preached in Kerala (Travancore-Cochin). But the religion did not make a headway in this country. In fact, after nineteen hundred years the followers of St. Thomas are still confined, as a group, to Kerala and even there they form hardly a third of the population.

Christianity came a second time to India with the Portuguese in the 16th century. The Spaniards and the Portuguese had forced their religion on the Red Indians of Central and South America. Spain forcibly converted the whole of Philippines. But Portugal could not convert the whole of even the small tract of Goa, with all its inquisitorial activities. Even to-day the Christians do not form a majority there.

The third wave of Christianity came with the missionaries of the British Period. Now the contest was unequal. On the Christian side were the new scientific knowledge of the modern world and the prestige and power of the Government; on the side of Hinduism, the ignorance of the masses with hardly any leaders for them. Hinduism received a few shocks in the beginning. Some of the enlightened western-educated Hindus renounced their religion. But a strange and powerful reaction followed. Great leaders of the religion appeared and produced a feeling of pride among its followers in its venerable antiquity and noble heritage and its unique position in the world. The activities of the Christian missionaries were now limited to the poorest and most backward communities, particularly the aborigines, from among which they have still been effecting conversion, though the means adopted by them are not always purely religious. But with all that, Christians form hardly 2 per cent of the population of the Indian sub-continent (2.3 p.c. in India and 1.7 p.c. in Pakistan according to 1951 census). It may be stated by way of contrast that in modern China and Japan conversion to Christianity, especially among the educated classes, is on a much larger scale than in India.

Thus it will be seen that for the last three thousand and five hundred years or so Hinduism has flourished with a strange vitality, withstanding very severe onslaughts. This, however, does not in itself establish the future invincibility of the religion, but provides good argument for each Hindu to do his utmost to preserve his great heritage.

Hindu Generosity

While considering the successful defence of the religion against foreign attacks, it should also be noted how Hinduism acquitted itself in the days of triumph and how it treated others who were at its mercy.

There is no historical record to show that Hindus practised acts like the *Inquisition* of Christians, that

Buddhists were massacred or non-conformists driven out of the land. On the other hand there is clear evidence of religious harmony. For example, the Ellora rock temples which belong to three different religions, Brahminism (Hinduism), Buddhism and Jainism, are all in a continuous line, the ordinary visitor being unable to distinguish where one religion ends and another begins. The same is the case in Khajuraho where Hindu and Jain temples stand together. In those parts of India which were reconquered by Hindus from the Muslims, not a single case of the forcible conversion of a Muslim to Hinduism is reported to have occurred. (In fact, Hinduism had stopped admitting others to its fold). No tax corresponding to the *jizia* was imposed on Muslims. Even Hindu temples turned into mosques are not known to have been restored to Hinduism. There are instances of great courtesy having been shown to the conquered. This contrasts strongly with what the Spaniards did to the Muslims who had subjugated their country for 800 years and had been finally defeated : after frequently subjecting them to the Inquisition and forced conversion they at last in 1609 gave the Muslims three days' time in which to clear out of the country.

Foreign religious refugees were made welcome to this land, as in the case of Jews in South India (1st century) and Parsees in Bombay Presidency (8th century).

It is this religious courtesy and the total absence of coercion in religious matters that built up a high moral prestige for Hinduism.

The Hindu Spirit among Converts

It is also interesting to note that Hindu converts to other religions have been, as a rule, more liberal than many followers of those religions elsewhere. For example, neither the Syrian Christians of Kerala nor the Roman Catholics of Goa are known to have burnt heretics or

witches or carried on a religious warfare among themselves or against infidels.

Similarly, Muslims in India have lived amicably with Hindus, forming part of a social unit with the latter as an important factor. Such fusion of Muslim and non-Muslim is rare outside India and China. Again, there were Indian Muslims who highly specialised in arts like portrait-painting, to which the religion as practised in the country of its origin was strongly opposed. Thus even where Hindus left their religion, they retained a good deal of their culture and adjusted their new religions to the ideals of that culture.

From all these points of view the history of Hinduism will appear to be unique in the religious history of the world.

If we were to consider the people in India who left Hinduism in the middle ages or modern times for some other religion, we would find that in many cases the conversions were effected by force, through the economic pressure of taxes, and through ordinary financial inducements. But more powerful than these external factors were internal causes like the ignorance of their religion among Hindus, due to the lack of religious leaders, and social disabilities of certain backward castes (called "untouchables"). The mass conversions in Sind, Kashmir and East Bengal can be directly attributed to the absence of religious teachers. Had there been a saint like Ramananda or Chaitanya or Namadev or Tukaram in these tracts, the masses there would not have changed their religion. What happened to these out-lying parts of India also happened to the Hindu settlements in Malaya and Indonesia : with minor exceptions all went over to other religions.*

* The same fate threatens the Hindus settled in West Indies and South America at the present time. On the other hand, the presence, on however small a scale, of enlightened elements in places like Fiji and Mauritius makes a difference in the situation.

If Christianity in modern times has made much less progress in India than it was expected to do, it is due to the knowledge of the purer and higher form of Hinduism being spread among the people by modern reformist bodies. It has also been found of late that wherever the knowledge of the Hindu religion has been brought, there has been a desire among converts from the religion to re-enter its fold. As Hinduism had shut its door against all comers no return was possible for ages. But as soon as the door was thrown open, even by private agencies, thousands were found to flock to it for re-admission.

This is certainly surprising and is another indication of the marvellous vitality and magic of Hinduism. We do not hear of such mass movements for re-admission to the original religion elsewhere. Greek Christians in large bodies have not wanted to go back to Paganism nor Hebrew Christians to Judaism nor Christians, converted to Islam, to Christianity nor the forcibly converted Muslims of Spain to Islam. But in India millions of Buddhists returned to Hinduism and in modern times thousands of Muslims and Christians have done so. All possible measures, political, administrative and diplomatic, were often found necessary in British India to check the movement among Hindu converts to other religions for a return to the Hindu fold. Again, religious leaders like Swami Shraddhanand, against whom no case of adopting unfair means in conversion is known to have been made, were martyred for their championship of the cause of such re-admission.

How to account for the magic of Hinduism? We think that the root of the whole matter lies in the imperishable truths and unconquerable spirit contained in the original documents, the Vedas, and the noble lives lived according to high moral and spiritual ideals embodied in them, by generations of sages and saints, kings and commanders as well as by the masses of the people. True, the Vedic religion through hundreds of years has accumulated a vast number of imperfections, but there were

also proper adjustments made from age to age to meet the requirements of the time-spirit. Perhaps nowhere else has the spiritual ideal of life and character been so lofty and nowhere else has the approximation of practice to some of these ideals been so close as it has been among Hindus. The weakness of Hinduism lies in the fact that all its ideals have not been followed with equal persistence or sincerity. The social ideal has been most neglected—caste and untouchability, in spite of certain economic advantages, have proved to be great stumbling-blocks in its way.

But if the Vedic religion, so disorganised and neglected, could exercise such powerful influence as its history shows, how much more can it do for humanity if it is truer to its noble aspirations and ideals !

III. Interpretation of the Vedas

It is usual for orientalists to consider the Vedas from the philological, anthropological or sociological point of view. Sufficient attention does not appear to have been paid to the fact that they have been the basis of a religion that has been followed by hundreds of millions of people for several thousand years.

There are difficulties in the way of a real religious study of the material. The invaluable commentaries of Indian scholars like Sayana have one grave defect : that in respect of the religion they usually speak in terms of their own age and are, therefore, often anachronistic. It was the indefatigable labour of the great orientalists that discovered new ways of interpreting the Vedas ; but in understanding their interpretation of the religion, we have to take note of certain preconceptions that are likely to have influenced their judgment in an adverse manner.

First, many of them were devout Christians, and believed that the worship of the true God was limited to Christianity alone and heathens and infidels, by what-

ever name they called the object of their worship, were not worshipping God, but something else.

Secondly, the consciousness of sin, and repentance in sack-cloth and ashes, have been accepted as the path of piety by Christians. Hence, to them the pagan cheerfulness of the Vedas must appear irreligious.

Thirdly, Christianity had popularised the ethical doctrine of surrender to evil, of turning the other cheek when smitten on the one, of loving the enemy. This was accepted as the highest morality. Hence the farther one went from this in respect of the ethical standard, the more degraded one was. But all forms of Paganism have the roots of their ethics in the heroic ideal. According to Vedic "Paganism," there could be no compromise with evil : it must be fought strenuously and relentlessly. The most important of the Vedic Deities, Indra, symbolises this heroic ideal. Now, to the typical Christian, all the fire and fury associated with heroism is the mark of a barbarous state of existence. Some orientalists have however, gone to the extent of recognising Varuna, described as the King of the Universe (other Deities also are so described) whose noose gets hold of every sinner and whose emissaries roam over the earth, as the ethical Deity, even as the Ultimate Reality. But the true Christian with his notion of "the highest ethics" could not find himself well disposed towards the Hero-God, Indra, to whom many of the grandest Vedic hymns are addressed.

Fourthly, the theological prepossessions of the orientalist were reinforced by scientific theories of the later nineteenth century. Chief among these was the doctrine of *social evolution and progress,* popularised by Herbert Spencer, which, however, had no real scientific connection with Darwin's theory of biological evolution. According to the law of progress, the world was getting more and more perfect as time passed on : hence things in the past were imperfect in proportion to their dis-

tance from the present time. This provided the orientalists with a ready assumption that the Vedic age being extremely remote, must have been in an extremely crude stage of civilisation. It was not till recently that this facile theory of progress was repudiated and among other things it was established that in matters of art and spiritual life there had been no progress for many hundreds of years. This new corrective, however, does not appear to have affected oriental studies.

Fifthly, the nineteenth century being an age of science, and the sciences that chiefly interested the orientalist being philology and anthropology, it was the practice in those days, first, to trace the words of literature to their roots. The practice was quite good in so far as it applied to words of which the meaning was known. But when unknown words were traced to real or imaginary roots and their meaning discovered, there was often in evidence a dogmatism worse than that of religion. Secondly, there was the application of anthropology. The explanation of features of life in terms of the crudest possible theory of their first origin became the rule of the day. The orientalists often let themselves go in this respect to lengths far outstripping the legitimate bounds of their science.

Having presumed that the Vedas belong to primitive times, orientalists have expressed learned opinions about their defects as primitive poetry. For example, Cowell says, "*The poetry of the Rig Veda is singularly deficient in that simplicity and natural pathos or sublimity which we naturally look for in the songs of an early period of civilisation. The language and style of most of the hymns is singularly artificial.*"

Now, the critic expecting to find qualities of the primitive ballad including "natural pathos" and puerile simplicity in the Vedas is disappointed at the "artificiality" of the Vedic language. It did not strike him that, though belonging to early times, the *Rig Veda* might also

belong to a highly advanced and considerably sophisticated age. Indian historians, as a rule, have followed in the wake of Spencerian progressivists till recent times when, as in the following statement of Dr. Radhakumud Mookerji, a new voice is being heard :—

"The first point of distinction is that the Veda and especially the primordial work known as the *Rigveda*, represents not merely the dawn of culture, but also its zenith. Indian thought is seen at its highest in the *Rigveda*......On the one hand it is the first book of India and also of mankind. At the same time it shows the highest point of human wisdom. We see in it the whole process of evolution from its beginning to its completion." (*Indian* P.E.N. March, 1942).

Last, but not least, is the *sense of certitude* that has marked the temper of the average oriental scholar. He often seems not to have any mental reservation in anything, nor to have allowed the benefit of doubt in respect of any of his conclusions. And it will not be wrong to believe that the very backward conditions in which Indian masses were found to live and their political subjugation tended to prejudice the case of their ancestors in the eyes of the western observers.

Now, in order to make an attempt to understand the Vedas as the basis of a religion that has vitally affected the lives of hundreds of millions of people, we should approach the orientalists in a critical spirit. Their researches can never be ignored in Vedic studies, but sufficient allowance must be made for their prepossessions. And the evidence of genuine Indian authorities in respect of the trend of religious thought should by no means be set aside. In this sense, the later Vedas will provide useful commentary on the earlier ; so will later developments of the Vedic religion in the Upanishads, in Buddhism, in the Bhāgavata cult, in the Yoga cult etc., provide valuable material for the interpretation of the Vedas even where they do not agree with the Vedic

standpoint. And traditional Vedic scholarship should also make its legitimate contribution.

IV. Vedic Theism

The Vedic view of the Divine is much subtler and deeper in spiritual content than the cults ordinarily known as monotheism and polytheism.

Max Müller distinguished the Vedic outlook from these by calling it henotheism. But he has not defined the term in such a way as to explain the full significance of Vedic theism. In the absence, however, of any other term in English we shall use it, by extending its connotation. Before considering it, it will be found useful to study monotheism and polytheism as religious cults.

1. *Monotheism*

To the philosopher monotheism and polytheism may mean just the belief in one God and many gods, respectively ; but in relation to practical religion to which the terms apply, they mean much more than this. It is customary to think that monotheism is superior to polytheism. The theory of progress has led to the belief that polytheism perfects itself into monotheism by a process of growth. But a close examination of the cults will show that the claim of superiority is based on assumptions not acceptable to all. It will appear that the difference between them is not that of the degree of perfection, but of method. They represent two distinct patterns of thought.

Let us consider some of the salient aspects of these patterns. *First,* monotheism is the belief in a single Divine Person. But this is only a partial description of the cult. Some think that it is the oneness alone that matters. But it is not so. For instance, one who thinks of the Divine as an impersonal Essence is not a mono-

theist in the technical sense of the term. Those who quote the famous *Rigvedic verse that says, "*The One Being the sages call by many names,*" do not sufficiently realise that here the One Being (*Ekam Sad*) is in the neuter, standing for the Divine Existence and not for a Divine Individual, and hence is not the same as contemplated by the well-known creeds that describe themselves as monotheistic. To the monotheistic creeds *God is a Person and not a metaphysical Essence.*

Secondly, as a Person the monotheistic Divinity cannot be conceived in any way one likes. For example, one who accepts a Single Divinity as Mother or Maiden is not a monotheist in the practical sense of the term. To the monotheist the Divinity is not only a Single Person but also a Masculine Person. *Thus the distinction between polytheism and monotheism is not one of number alone but of gender also.*

Thirdly, a monotheistic God cannot be any kind of male Person : He cannot, for example, be a Child or a Boy. He can only be a Father. One would not be a monotheist if one were to think of the Divine as Brother or any other relation.

Supposing "Agni" in the following verse means the Ultimate Being, He would not be the typical monotheistic God because the relations in which He stands to man are more than one :

> Agni I deem my Father, my Kinsman ;
> I deem Him my Brother, my Friend for ever.
> (*R.* VII 7.3)[1]

In other words, the monotheistic God is not only a single Person and a male Person, but *He stands in a single relationship to man—that of Father.*

Fourthly, even as Father He must be believed to be a very elderly Person ; *not only a Father but a Patriarch.*

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1. No. 18.

Fifthly, as a Person the monotheistic God cannot exist anywhere ; He has His special abode—heaven. He is a Father who is in heaven. He may go wherever He likes, but heaven is His place of residence.

Perhaps the most essential difference between monotheism and polytheism lies here : that *monotheism contemplates the Divine in heaven and polytheism contemplates the Divine in the universe.*

This makes a difference in the entire conception of life and religion. To the monotheist heaven represents a superior plane of existence and God a superior order of reality. To that order belong angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, who also live on that plane. According to this cult while heaven is sacred, the universe is profane ; while God and the angels who live in heaven are holy, man who lives on the earth is sinful ; while God is great, man is small.

Polytheism finds the Divine in the universe and hence there is but a thin dividing line between the sacred and the profane, the human and the Divine, the mortal and the immortal. In fact polytheism contemplates heaven on earth and God in nature and among men.

Hence while polytheism is attached to the earth and thinks in terms of life and the joy of living, monotheism is attached to a hereafter and lives for heaven, looking down upon earthly things. This trait of polytheism has been called Paganism.

Sixthly, monotheism is not a simple belief in a God in heaven who is a Father. Its God, a Patriarch, is a Ruler. He is the King of Heaven. And from heaven He also rules over the universe as its sole Monarch. Thus *monotheism is monarchical theism.*

Hence the ideology of monotheism is the ideology of monarchy. Heaven is the royal abode. The King is seated in His throne. He has his servants and emissa-

ries. He appoints His vicegerents. He takes the best of His subjects to His heavenly court. The worst of them are flung into the dark prison-house, Hell.

As King, He claims unstinted allegiance and homage. The subjects must offer their respects often enough and regularly enough to satisfy His royal position. They must bow and bend before Him and thus honour and exalt Him. They must stand in dread of Him.

And as the only King He is jealous of usurpers and rivals. He alone should receive the homage and no other. To offer homage to any but the God of Heaven is to be a traitor to the Kingdom of God. No wonder that ideal subjects of the Kingdom have thought that nothing can please the King better than the punishment of those who try to offer their honour and homage to persons or objects other than the God of Heaven.

Seventhly, the monotheistic God has His perpetual Adversary or Enemy—Satan, who is a sort of Anti-God. Hence there is rivalry between God and Satan for the possession of the universe. Men are in constant risk of going over to God's Enemy and God's wrath is directed against them when they are suspected of having done so.

Eighthly, as monotheism centres in a Monarch, who is an absolute Ruler, the chief thing for His subjects is to know His will. The Divine Will is the only guide for man in his conduct on the earth. How to know the will of God? He sends His messengers (prophets) on earth to make His will known to mankind. Those men are virtuous who bow to His will and make it prevail on earth as in heaven. Those are sinners who disobey or defy His will or—it comes to that—the prophet who conveys the will to mankind.

Religion, here, is the exercise by man of his own will to force himself to obey the Will of God.

The difficulty with monotheism is that its pro[illegible] are not universally accepted. As a result there has been acute rivalry between monotheistic creeds, each claiming an exclusive relation with the Ultimate Being.

2. *Polytheism*

Polytheism finds many gods instead of just the One of monotheism in heaven. It believes in a synod or assembly of gods, each being a well-defined individual, possessing a character of his own, and each distinguished from the others by sex, special attributes and sometimes even age. The only difference between monotheism and popular polytheism is that in the latter the divine power is not centralised in one person; and hence the divine government is olygarchic instead of monarchical.

Here one god or goddess may be invoked against another and the evil points in one may be counterbalanced by the good points in another.

Again, a monotheist stands or falls by one God: a polytheist, having several, may change one god for another if the former fails to satisfy him. Thus, for a monotheist, the only alternative to his faith is heresy or atheism; but for a polytheist the alternative is not the negation of God, but the search for a better and greater god.

Such was the polytheism of Egypt and Greece and Rome and such has been, with certain differences the polytheism in some of the Indian Puranas.

But there is a higher Polytheism in India which merges in Pantheism. The worshipper here comes to a point when he does not think of this god or that god but of the Divine Being, often most poetically apprehended.

Polytheism, whether anthropomorphic or losing itself in Pantheism, has some general characteristics, though

in the pantheistic form there are subtleties not found in the popular type.

First, polytheism is *poetic theism.* It approaches the divine idea through poetry. Hence it delights in the glory of form and colour; it touches the whole gamut of human emotions from the sublime to the tender. It includes the æsthetic as an essential factor.

Secondly, polytheism, being poetical, needs *the poet and the artist* to interpret it; whereas monotheism, being political in structure, needs *the soldier* to fight the battle of the Monarch of Heaven. Polytheism does not know any holy war; while it is a usual feature of monotheism.

Thirdly, polytheism, in accordance with its innate tendencies, attempts to have its hold on the masses of people by *poetical and artistic forms*—by rituals and ceremonies, as well as by the appeal of music and song and of architecture, sculpture, painting, dancing etc. Monotheism, on the other hand, builds up a *central authority* and an *institution* with ramifications that penetrate into the entire life of the people, often to the rigid exclusion of some, if not most, of the arts.

Hence, *fourthly,* the appeal of polytheism is like that of poetry and art—spontaneous, *independent,* unofficial. The appeal of monotheism is centred in the *compulsion* of an institution and its laws. It is, so to speak, the official pressure of the institution that maintains the attachment of its followers to it.

Thus, while *conformity* is the fundamental condition of the existence of monotheism, *non-conformity* is part of the essence of polytheism. Hence, while there is uniformity in monotheism, polytheism is marked by variety.

It was seldom that polytheism became a State religion; whereas monotheism is hard put to it to support itself without the backing of a State. As a rule, poly-

theistic creeds have been maintained by individual initiative and effort.

It will appear, *fifthly*, that polytheism, having no authoritative institution for its support, has to exist by making itself constantly acceptable to the people. So while remaining attached to the spirit, it has changed its forms very much as styles in art and literature have changed from time to time. In other words, polytheism must be perpetually *creative* and *vital* in order to escape extinction. If Egyptian and Babylonian polytheism disappeared, it was because it was not creative enough. Greek and Roman polytheism, however, had not lost its creativity when it was superseded by Christianity. The creativity it possessed fertilised the Christian religion during the middle ages and at the end of that period it reasserted itself in its pagan form, bringing about a revolution in the intellectual and spiritual life of Europe and a rebirth (Renaissance) of man.

Thus, while polytheism has owed its continued existence to flexibility and the capacity for change and adjustment, monotheism has derived much strength from orthodoxy and dogmatism, sometimes leading to the ruthless persecution and destruction of heretics and infidels.

The difference here is what Matthew Arnold discovered between Hebraism and Hellenism. Monotheism is characterised by "strictness of conscience" or severe conformity, and polytheism by "spontaneity of consciousness" or independent perception and expression.

Sixthly, polytheism, the reaction of the free poetic soul to the æsthetic appeal of the universe, makes *imagination* the chief vehicle of expression. Hence it deals in concrete imagery which is representational, suggestive, and symbolical, while monotheism, with the firm discipline of the will leading to the acceptance of definite articles of faith, including chiefly a belief in heaven and a God in heaven, thinks in terms of *facts*,

and demands unquestioning faith in them. For example, according to monotheistic theology, God's creation of the earth is an historical event that can be definitely dated. So is the birth of the Son of God according to monotheistic Christianity. No true Christian has attempted to interpret the birth of Christ or Virgin Motherhood as a mere figure of speech or symbol.

Thus, while polytheism flies on the wings of imagination, monotheism is pinned down to facts. Disbelieve one of the facts and the whole structure of monotheism falls to pieces. But polytheism will remain unaffected by such attitudes. It makes no claim to historicity : it has nothing to do with facts and dates. Hence it has no quarrel with science, just as poetry has none. For example, Christian theologians have found that if Darwin's theory of evolution is accepted, then the whole doctrine of creation as given in the Christian Bible will fall through and the religion itself will face annihilation. But it is not so in the case of polytheism. If, for example, Darwinism opposes some creation theory in some Purana, it will have no effect on the religion, because the Purana is not understood literally and historically ; it is taken imaginatively and symbolically. And a belief in the creation theory is not part of the polytheistic creed.

3. *Vedic Henotheism : The Cult of the One in Many*

There is a certain religious attitude which one comes across in different ages, and which is typical of the religion as found in the Vedas—the earliest and most characteristic expression of the spiritual idealism of the Aryan type of civilisation—according to which the Divinity is contemplated as the One in Many and the Many in One. The term 'henotheism,' coined by Max Müller, covers part of this idea. Primarily, it defines an attitude resembling both monotheism and polytheism as religious cults. Henotheism resembles monotheism in that it describes the Divinity as One. It resembles polytheism in that it contemplates the Divine as a God, or a

1. See No. 162.

Goddess; and Gods and Goddesses named by it... many. Often several are named together. But henotheism differs both from monotheism and polytheism. Its Deity is not the same as in Semitic monotheism nor are the different Gods and Goddesses so well defined and individualised as in polytheistic cults. Its speciality lies in that, though it contemplates many gods, it asserts each as the Supreme Being. The fact is that in henotheism there is a general devotional attitude towards the Divine, and this attitude remains unchanged even if the Deities addressed are changed.

The Vedas, however, go farther than Max Müller's henotheism. They do so in two ways. First, by clear statements one Deity is identified with another or different Deities with one Deity, (*e.g.* Agni) and secondly, all Deities are identified with one Divine Entity in the neuter gender as *Ekam* (the One), *Tat Sat* (That Reality), etc. Thus Vedic theism is the worship of the One Divinity in many names and forms. We may call this 'Advaitist Theism' [distinguishing it from the general Advaitist philosophy (Monism) which tries to prove the unity not of God only, but of all orders of reality.]

Two essential aspects of Vedic Advaitism arrest our attention.

First, the subjective aspect: If we consider the attitude of the worshipper the cult appears to be monotheistic, in the philosophical sense. Every Vedic prayer is born in a spiritual mood, a praying attitude, in which the mind responds to the vision of the Divine. This attitude and this feeling remain constant, though the contents of the vision vary. This psychological factor provides the point of unity.

Second, the objective aspect: If we were to ignore the subjective feeling and contemplate the multiplicity of forms, the cult would look like simple polytheism. Hence, observed externally, in relation to the form, the Vedic cult would appear polytheistic except for the

amorphous character of the Deities. It is usual for many orientalists to describe it as polytheism. The description, as a purely formal one, may not appear inaccurate. But it loses sight of the spirit, and it is the spirit which is its chief point and which gives the cult its speciality.

In respect of spirit one important difference between Vedic Advaita and polytheism is that Vedic Deities do not combine in their character virtue and vice, goodness and evil like polytheistic gods and goddesses. All of them are good. Each represents the highest moral standard conceivable by the sage.

Not only is there no moral defect, but there is no æsthetic defect either, in the Vedic Deities. No Vedic God or Goddess is deformed or decrepit. All are beautiful and noble.

Here we find the secret of the identification of one Deity with another. In form the Deities are many, but in spirit they are one. Vedic henotheism is an expression of this spiritual approach.

(a) *The Aesthetic Factor*

In the Vedas each vision of the Divinity carries an æsthetic value; for it is a vision of beauty and splendour. As a religious attitude it is what the *Bhagavad Gita* calls 'Vibhuti Yoga'—the path of splendour. The typical form of the splendour is light (Jyoti) and in the more abstract sense, glory (Bhargas), greatness (Mahas) as well as loveliness (Śri), beauty (Vapus), wonder (Citram) etc. According to this outlook the Divinity is Deva, 'the shining One' or 'the glorious One.' Thus the conception of Divinity becomes primarily a generic idea, and, secondarily, the idea of an individual deity. Hence there is no essential contradiction in identifying one specific deity with another, so long as the generic idea remains constant.

(b) The Ethical Factor

The Vedic Deity embodies the ethical value as much as the æsthetic There are two basic terms in the Vedas indicating their ethical value—Satya (truth) and Ṛita (eternal order, discipline of eternal law, goodness). It may be said that there can be no God or Goddess in the Vedas who does not represent the conceptions of Satya (truth) and Ṛita (eternal order).

God is Satya-dharman, 'one for whom truth is the law of being,'[1] Satya-śava, 'one for whom truth is the source of power,'[2] Satyasya Sunu, 'Son of truth,[3] and so on, and finally He is 'the truth'—Satyam[4] or in the metaphysical sense, Sat,[5] reality. Similarly, a God is Ṛitävän, upholder of Eternal Order,[6] and a Goddess Ṛitävarî, protectress of Eternal Law,[7] and a Deity is, in the abstract, Ṛitam—Eternal Order.[8]

This takes religion to some fundamentals which can be contemplated as ends in themselves without reference to a Divinity. Hence Vedic theism is based on moral values which, as in the case of Buddhism, may be upheld in a non-theistic way, too. So in India it is not the atheist who is really objectionable, but the person who repudiates moral law (Dharma). The earth, according to the Vedas, is upheld not by the will of God, but by truth (Satya)[9] of which God is the supreme exponent. Similarly the Veda says that God reveals Himself through Ṛita (Eternal Order.)[10]

God is supreme because He represents not only the beauty and splendour of Nature but also all virtue, all goodness, all nobility in man and woman at its highest. (This is another form of Vibhuti Yoga). In the Vedic prayers, there are descriptive terms for the Divinity

1. No. 223; 2. No. 105; 3. R. VIII. 69.4; 4. No. 223; 5. Nos. 26, 60; 6. No 227; 7. No. 113; 8. No. 120; 9. R. X. 85.1; 10. No. 135.

which are in the superlative form, indicating the supremacy of the Divinity, though the names of the deities are different. Thus, whether in one name or another, the Divinity in the Vedas has been spoken of as the supreme poet (Kavitama), the supreme hero (Vîratama), as the supremely beneficent (śantama) etc.; similarly as the supreme father (Pitritama), the supreme mother (Matritamä),[1] and so on. These terms indicate the Vedic sense of quality and value. Again, to an intellectual person, the superlative can imply only one individual ; hence when two deities are described by the same superlative, the implication is that they are the same. For example, Agni and Brahmanaspati are both spoken of as Vipratama, the supreme sage ; and, as the superlative adjective indicates one person, so Agni and Brahmanaspati are one Divine Being by implication.

(c) *The Metaphysical Factor* : *One Essence*

So far it is the simple henotheism of Max Müller, but the oneness of the Divine, implied through the psychological and ethical factors, is also presented in the Veda as a definite metaphysical proposition. It is clearly stated that 'the One Being the sages contemplate in many ways'—Ekam santam bahudhä kalpayanti (*Rig Veda,* X, 114.5).[2] Sometimes it is said that all Gods are one in Indra (*e.g. Rig Veda,* III, 54.17)[3] or in Agni (*Rig Veda* II. 1),[4] and sometimes one God is described as All-God (Vishva-Deva).[5] The following well-known verse sets down the Vedic Advaita in clear language :

> They speak of Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni ; and there are the divine Suparna and Garutmat. The One Being the wise call by many names (Ekam sad viprä bahudhä vadanti) as Agni, Yama, Matarishvan (*Rig Veda,* I. 164.46).[6]

But here, as a close observation will show, the conception of the Divine becomes metaphysical, because the

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1. See No. 172; 2. No. 64; 3. No. 68; 4. No. 65; 5. See No. 106; 6. No. 60.

Divinity is spoken of in the neuter as One Being (Ekam Sat).[1] This method is not casual; it has been frequently used in the Vedas and is, in fact, the metaphysical foundation of Vedic theism. In the 'Creation Hymn' it is said that 'the One breathed, airless by self-impulse' (*Rig Veda,* X 129.2),[2] in which the term, One (Ekam), is in the neuter. The idea does not occur only in the first and tenth cycles of the *Rig Veda* (supposed to be later than the others, but elsewhere, too. The following occurs in *Rig Veda,* III 54.8. 'One All (Vishvam Ekam) is Lord of the moving and the steady, of what walks, what flies—this multiform creation.'[3] Here 'all' is in the neuter.

Here we come to a doctrine not of oneness of the type of being called God who lives in a particular place, but of one Divine Being understood metaphysically, which pervades all. That this metaphysical description in the neuter singular and the poetical description in masculine and feminine, in dual and plural, do not contradict each other is clearly indicated in the Vedas. Hence this Vedic theism is not simple henotheism but something far more subtle and abstruse—far more sophisticated than any primitive idea or even modern civilised notion has been. For example, in a verse in the *Yajur Veda,* in which Tat (That) implies the Divine Being, it is said :

> Agni is That, Aditya is That, Vayu is That, Chandramas is That, Light is That, Brahman is That, Apah (Waters) are Those, Prajapati is He (32.1).[4]

Here not only is 'That' predicated to masculine deities like Agni, Aditya, and so on, but to Apah, the deity in plural, too. And 'That' is made synonymous with 'Those' and 'He'. In other words it is indicated that 'That', 'Those', and 'He' are the same. [One of the Upanishads tries to clarify the meaning by reading 'Apas' (Waters) are That, Prajapati is That, (*Sveta. Up.* VIII, 27)].

1. Cf. No. 26; 2. No. 61; 3. No. 174; 4. No. 63.

In another *Yajur Veda* verse (32.8) the Divinity is spoken of in the neuter as Tat Sat (That Being) in the first line, and as the Lord (Vibhu) in the masculine in the second. Here is the Advaitic theism of the Vedas. The unity of God does not mean that there is only one individual in the species called God, but that the Divinity is supreme and all-pervading and all reality becomes unified in Him. "Yatra vishvam bhavatyekanîdam"—'In whom all find one nest' (*Yajur Veda,* 32.8).[1] This Advaita includes monotheism in the pure, philosophical sense; as, for example, the *Sama Veda* says—

> Come, ye all, with your spiritual might (Ojas), together to the Lord of glory (Div), the only One, who, indeed, is the Guest of men; He is the First; to Him who desires us, all pathways turn. He is in truth the only One. (*Sama Veda,* 372).[2]

The *Atharva Veda* (XIII) puts the idea arithmetically:

> To him who knows this God simply as One
> Neither second nor third nor fourth is He called;
> (Nor fifth nor sixth nor seventh etc.)
> He oversees all—what breathes and what breathes not,
> To Him goes the conquering power.

But the idea takes a more comprehensive turn with what follows—

> He is the One, the One alone,
> In Him all Deities become One alone.[3]

Here simple monotheism develops into Vedic henotheism. Monotheism understands One God; One ruling over all; but beyond it lies the conception of the Vedic Advaita—of the One in many, and the many in the One.

Philosophers, by the application of logic, may try to reduce the proposition to simple monism—that the One is real and the many unreal; but the Vedic Advaita lies beyond the logic of monism. It takes its stand on a mystical experience in which the One is real and the

1. No. 85; 2. No. 3; 3. No. 69.

many too are real ; and the many find their unity in the One.

Those who accept mysticism can alone penetrate into the conception of the One in the many—as in the following :

Aditi is the sky, Aditi the mid-region,
Aditi the mother, the father, the son,
Aditi all deities, the five-classed men,
Aditi is all that is born, all that will be born.
(*Rig Veda*, I. 89. 10)[1]

Here is a conception that goes beyond time and space. In the following the logical sense of quantity is superseded :

And both the seas are Varuna's loins
And He lies in this small drop of water.
(*Atharva Veda*. IV. 163).[2]

The all-pervasiveness of the One is poetically conceived not only in the cosmic world but also in the world of man. The following is addressed to Brahman, the neuter term for the Divinity :

Thou art man, Thou art woman, Thou art boy,
Thou art maiden ;
Thou art the old man tottering with the staff ;
Thou existest on all sides.
(*Atharva Veda*, X. 8.27).[3]

The Veda has not, to any the least extent, ignored the individual vision of the Divine—whether in the masculine or the feminine or the neuter ; whether in the singular, the dual, or the plural. Hence it has maintained the poetry of particular experiences. For example, Agni is the One existence—Ekam—but he is contemplated in the masculine ; so Ushas, though one (Ekam), is contemplated in the feminine as in the following :

One (Ekah : mas.) is Agni kindled in many a place ; One (Ekah : mas.) is Surya shining over all.

One (Ekä : fem.) is Ushas illumining all this. That which is One (Ekam : neuter) has become This All (Sarvam : neuter).

(*Rig Veda*, VIII. 58.2).[4]

1. No. 77; 2. No. 73; 3. No. 79; 4. No. 82.

This is the way of poetry and of mysticism. The theism of it is only the intellectual interpretation of a deep experience.

(*d*) *The Ritualistic Factor : One Single Rite*

The Vedic ritual (Yajna) is in keeping with this Advaita character. Unlike the polytheistic or fetishistic ritual, it is one uniform ceremonial without, as a rule, any special applicability to the Deity worshipped. Whatever the Deity, the ritual is the same. The same oblation or libation is offered, though, in the accompanying prayer, one or many gods may be mentioned.

One important difference from the ritualistic point of view between Vedic Advaita and polytheism is this: that the Vedas have made poetry and music alone the media of expression;† whereas, polytheism has used plastic arts including sculpture. Sculpture so thoroughly particularises a deity that the logical anomaly of identifying one deity with another becomes a formidable difficulty. For example, the masculine Agni and Surya and the feminine Ushas are spoken of as Ekam—One, in the neuter. In visual arts such identification cannot be effected. Hence Vedic Advaita, inasmuch as it substitutes one deity for another and identifies all deities with One Essence (in the neuter gender), cannot possibly fix the deities into definite plastic forms.

Vedic deities are visions, but formless. They have received embodiment only in the poetry of the Vedas. When we read of Ushas—'the daughter of the sky.'[1] 'like the bride decked by her mother,[2] the last thing we should do is to imagine the female figure of a deity concealed somewhere in the sky, who appears, on occa-

† Cf. *Rig Veda*, X. 71.11 : 'One plies his task by reciting the verses. One sings the sacred hymn in Sakvari measures. 'One, the man of wisdom, speaks of the knowledge of the existing thing ; and one lays down the rules of Yajna.'

Here four methods of religious practice are mentioned : recitation, singing, the path of knowledge and Yajna.

1. No. 114; 2. No. 111.

sions, to mortals whom she favours. This would be polytheism and Vedic Advaita differs from polytheism.§

(e) *The Social Factor*

The social grouping of the Veda is in accordance with its principle of unity in diversity. It recognises the division of society into four types—the man of knowledge and religion (Brahmin), the man of politics and warfare (Kshatriya), the man of trade and industry (Vaiśya), and the working man (Śûdra); but it says that all of them are limbs of the Cosmic Being: that they are respectively the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of Purusha.[1] This means, in philosophical language, that the Śûdra, the Vaiśya, the Kshatriya, and the Brahmin, though separated by quality and occupation, are the same in spirit. This is another instance of the many in One. It is social Advaita.

Equally interesting is the social application of the principle of Vedic Advaita in respect of members of other religions. The hymn to the Earth in the *Atharva Veda* recognises the variety of men and creeds on the earth: Janam bihrati bahudhä viväcasam nanadharmänam prithivî yathankasam—'The earth that bears people speaking varied languages, with various religious rites (Dharman) according to the places of abode' (*Atharva Veda*, XII. 1.45).[2]

§ Some of the images in Vedic poetry are not capable of being reduced to definite forms. For example, the famous description of Purusha—the Cosmic Person—as 'thousand-headed, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed' is not the description of a figure; because, for one thing, the Vedas do not entertain the grotesque—all gods are beautiful; for another, the super-subtle Vedic poet should not be supposed to be imagining an equal number of heads and eyes. (The emendation of *Atharva Veda* here changing 'thousand-headed' into 'thousand-handed' was unnecessary, because the *Rig Veda* did not conceive a form.)

Similarly, the description of Indra as both father and mother can lead in the case of sculpture to only an artistic

1. No. 249; 2. No. 280.

We find the antithesis between Arya and Dasa or Dasyu in the Vedas : but the antithesis is stated as one between enlightenment and ignorance, goodness and wickedness, lawful life and lawlessness. The Veda, unlike Buddhism, preaches open battle against all forces of evil. Indra, the supreme Being, is also supreme as a fighter against evil—he is described as Vṛitrahantama, supreme among killers of Vritra, the power of darkness.[1] But no question of the 'infidel' is raised by the idea. On the other hand, it is stated that the enemy, whether our kin or a foreigner, should be valiantly opposed (*Rig Veda* VI. 75.19).[2] The evil-doer from the ranks of the forward-marching people must be eliminated (*Rig Veda*, X. 53.8).[3] It is also said that God is the God of Dasa as well as of Arya—Yasyāyam vishva äryo däsah śevädhipa arih—'Lord God of glory is He to whom both Arya and Dasa belong' (*Rig Veda*, VIII. 51.9). There is a prayer for the forgiveness of sins against the foreigner (*Rig Veda*, V. 85.7).[4]

The *Atharva Veda* says God is as much of the foreign land (Videśya) as of our own land (Samdeśya) (IV. 16.8).[5]

So the principle of unity in diversity covers all human relations.

There are mantras which extend this principle to all living beings (sarväni bhutäni, *Yajur Veda*, 36.18)[6] till at last we come to a grand conception of universal peace and serenity—the harmony with Nature (sarvam śäntiḥ) *Yajur Veda*, 36.17).[7]

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feat like 'Ardhanariśhvara' which will be out of keeping with the Vedic spirit. Likewise the sculptural representation of the Vedic symbol for the ultimate—Suparna—the beautiful-winged (Bird)—will destroy its poetry and philosophy and leave in its place mere totemism! Similar will be the case with descriptions of the Divinity as Vrisha—the bull, or Varäha—the boar; terms that indicate nobility and greatness.

1. Under No. 172; 2. No. 262; 3. No. 196; 4. No. 273; 5. No. 72; 6. No. 275; 7. No. 281.

Thus it will be found that Vedic Advaita is not a casual creed ; it is comprehensive in its application to life. People worshipped deities of their own. Polytheism synthesised them into 'a pluralistic pantheon in which every deity was recognised as divine, with, of course, qualitative differences. So Roman polytheism absorbed Greek and Egyptian gods within its religious creed. Hindu polytheism absorbed different kinds of gods and goddesses of different sects and tribes. But something different and subtler and grander had been done ages before them by Vedic Aryans. *They accepted all the different deities that were worshipped, but synthesised them as manifestations of One Divinity*, so that any one of them could be identified with any other or all the rest. Only a mind of the highest subtlety and accustomed to the mystical apprehension of reality could be conceived to be capable of this. In the following verses (out of many) which occur in the beginning of the second cycle of *Rig Veda*, an ideal of religious synthesis was set up, which only the greatest saints and sages of the world in the long after-ages have been found to contemplate. The poet worships the Deity Agni, but he finds that there are other Deities, male and female, like Indra, Varuna, Aditi and so on, whom other sages have worshipped. He says :

> Thou, O Agni ! art Indra, the Hero of heroes.
> Thou art Vishnu of the mighty stride, adorable.
> Thou, O Brahmanaspati, art Brahman who knows power ;
> Thou, O Sustainer, tendest us with wisdom. (3)
>
> Thou, O Agni, art King Varuna whose laws stand fast ;
> Thou as Mitra, wonder-worker, art adorable ;
> Thou art Aryaman, Lord of heroes, enriching all ;
> O Thou God ! Thou liberal Anśha in the synod. (4)
>
> Thou, God Agni, art Aditi to the offerer of oblation ;
> Thou, Hotra Bhārati, art glorified by the song ;
> For conferring power, Thou art the hundred-wintered Ilā ;
> Thou, Lord of wealth, art Vṛitra-slayer and Sarsvatī. (11)
>
> (*Rig Veda*, II. 1).[1]

1. No. 65.

Some Orientalists have held the opinion that in the Vedas there is really nothing like henotheism ; that it is simply polytheism ; only, owing to the peculiar primitive mentality of the worshipper, every deity is flattered as the Supreme Deity. But in the Veda we find not only henotheism, the description of every deity as the Supreme Deity, but also the identification of one deity with another, or of one deity with all the rest as in the above-quoted passage ; or of a deity or all deities with the abstract Divine Essence in the neuter form. Is there anything like this in polytheism ? Can one speak of Apollo as Hermes, or of Hera as Athene, or of Apollo as Zeus, Hermes, Hera, and Athene ? Never has polytheism, ancient or modern, spoken in the manner of the Veda, of the One in the Many and the Many in the One.

(f) *Vedic Henotheism in Post-Vedic Ages*

The Advaita Theism, though a speciality of the Vedas, is found in later ages too. For example, we find a number medieval sages in India preaching this idea in their own way : that God is one, though called by different people in different ways. Ordinarily, it is toleration of other people's Gods. But the Vedic sage's attitude is not simply one of toleration, but of acceptance ; and it is not only the acceptance of another's God with the hospitality of polytheism, but acceptance of all gods imagined by all other sages as identical with one's own —the one Deity without a second.

We read about Sri Ramakrishna that part of his religious experience was the contemplation of the Divinity according to the conception of different sects and religions. Here we find, in our times, a religious phenomenon of the same type as Vedic Advaita : of contemplating the Divine not only in terms of one's own God but of everybody else's God.

Thus henotheism, as found in the Vedas, is not a simple religious theory, but the symptom of a deep spiritual experience.

The working of this henotheistic principle is found in the synthetic part of the Avatara theory: that all Avataras are incarnations of the same Deity. The result of this is the resolution of age-long sectarian differences. Rama and Paraśurama were Kshatriya and Brahmin heroes in opposition; but in the melting-pot of Avatara theology both are incarnations of Vishnu. Even Buddha, the rebel against Brahminism, became, by this process, an Avatara, and hence the conflict of ages was composed not by simple toleration but by acceptance. This is the way—though a popular way—of Advaita theism.

The success of henotheism as a religious cult is found to depend on the fulfilment of the essential conditions including the principles enumerated above: (i) that the worshipper must bring a pure, prayerful mind; (ii) that whatever deity he entertains should be conceived in terms of truth, goodness, and beauty; (iii) that the metaphysical basis of unity in diversity should be securely established; (iv) that the ritual should be in keeping with the idea of unity; and (v) that the unity should not remain a mere abstraction but must find a concrete form in terms of social life, both internal and international. Henotheism, as found in the Vedas, can therefore, apply only to highly cultured concepts of religion. Where this attitude prevails, polytheism is easily transformed into henotheism and the worship of many gods in different shrines becomes really the worship of God. This has been the case in India.

(g) *Henotheism and other Religious Concepts*

From our examination of the different religious concepts regarding the Divinity we find that there are different attitudes that one religion can take up in respect of another. One is that of monotheism with its exclusive claim of its God as the only God; then there is the method of accumulation followed by polytheism, in which all types of deities imagined at different times by different people are entertained and fostered and allowed to exercise whatever influence they can on the

religious life of the people; and finally there is the method of spiritual synthesis represented by Vedic henotheism, in which there is no mere toleration, no mere hospitality to another's God, but acceptance of another's God as one's own and as the One Divinity. This last is logically puzzling, but it has been part of the mystic experience of great sages and saints at all times.

The henotheistic God is not jealous of other Gods, for, in the last analysis, all true worship is the worship of God. As the *Bhagavad Gita* says:

> Even those devotees who worship other Gods with faith, really worship Me, (though) in an irregular way.
> (IX. 23).

Thus while polytheism is a federation of different grades of theism, monotheism, in its accepted religious sense, carries the imperialistic challenge of one social group against all other groups. But a plurality of monotheisms, by its very logic, creates a situation in which constant conflict is the rule of life. The way out of this has been found to lie in henotheism as found in the Vedas—the acceptance of one another's Gods as the One Divinity and perfecting the knowledge of That through spiritual effort and experience. This henotheism or Advaitic theism has worked as a powerful force in the spiritual life of India, though in its comprehensive form it is a special feature of the Veda.

V. Some Basic Principles of the Vedic Religion

It may be said of the different religious sects originating in India that the thing that matters most with them is not so much what one believes as how one behaves; not so much the intellectual acceptance as the moral conduct and the spiritual build. The basis of religion, then, is the moral law with spiritual discipline guiding life. The common term for this law and this discipline is Dharma, a word cognate with *form* in English. Dharma is the ideal form of conduct.

A. The Six-fold Dharma

Vedic theism presupposes the existence of Dharman (an older form of the term), meaning, the Eternal Law. For example, it is said of Vishnu that 'He upholds the eternal statutes (Dharmāni)' (*Rg.* I. 22. 18). Agni has been described as the 'President of Eternal Laws'—Adhyaksham dharmaṇām (*Rg.* VIII. 43, 24).

The *Mahabharata,* wanting to give the root-meaning of the word Dharma, says :

> Because it upholds, it is called Dharma ; Dharma upholds the creation.
>
> (*Karṇaparva*, 69.59).

Lord Buddha popularised the term in its Pali form, Dhamma, signifying eternal moral principles, unconnected with, and independent of, one's faith in the Divinity.

Thus Dharma stands for the fundamentals of religion, the ideal form of conduct that was accepted as the foundation of right living by all religious orders in ancient India, whether theistic, atheistic, or agnostic. The contents of Dharma are more or less taken for granted by the people from tradition or from the general outlook of a particular religious order. Latter-day leaders of religion have, as a rule, defined their concepts in detail. It would be interesting to find a comprehensive definition of Dharma in early religious literature—of the basic principles that are believed to uphold society.

Such a statement about the contents of Dharman (Dharma) is found in the *Atharva Veda.* It speaks of the earth as "upheld by Dharman :

> Prithivîm dharmanā dhṛitām
>
> (Ath. XII. 1. 17).

and in the same hymn it enumerates the principles that uphold the earth :

Satyam brihad ṛitam ugram dīkshā tapo
brahma yajnah prithivîm dhārayanti.

'Truth, Eternal Order that is great and stern, consecration, austerity, prayer and ritual—these uphold the earth.'
(*Ath.* XII. 1.1).[1]

These six, then, according to the Vedic ideal make Dharman or Dharma, the fundamental principles of religion. Let us consider them.

I. Truth

It is important to note that the Veda places truth first and ritual last in religion. This is not without its special significance, for in every age in the history of the Vedic religion ungrudging supremacy has been conceded to truth, and there is nothing in this religion like articles of faith. In every age the problem has been to find out *truth* and not to stick to *belief*. Every period of Indian history has had its sage and seeker after truth and the sincerity and freedom of their minds have been responsible for the maintenance of the philosophical and spiritual outlook.

In the Vedas truth has been described as the essence of divinity. '*Savitā satyadharmā* : The Deity has truth as the law of His being, says the *Atharva Veda* (*Ath.* VII. 24.1).[2] The *Rig Veda* calls the Deities manifestations of truth :

'The three and thirty Deities, the manifestations of Truth, saw You Two (Asvins) approach Truth.' (*Rg.* VIII. 57. 2).[2]

Elsewhere in the *Rig Veda* the Deity has been described as true (*Rg.* I. 1. 5 ; I. 29. 1). Ultimately, in religion, as understood in ancient India, it is not so much a question of theism and atheism as it is one of truth and untruth.

'Let us worship Indra, the True (*satya*) and not untruth (*anṛita*).' (Rg. VIII. 62, 12).[2] A sage defends himself by saying that he did not make untruth (*anṛita*) his God. (*Rg.* VII. 104. 14).

1. No. 222; 2. No. 223.

Prayer and ritual of the right type come out of a truthful life and true heart. The libation of Soma flows—'speaking truth, truthful in action'—satyam vadan satyakarman (*Rg.* IX. 113. 4).[1] The path of religious progress is the path of truth. An Upanishadic sage says :

By truth is the divine path laid out
By which sages, having obtained what they desire,
Ascend the supreme abode of Truth.
(*Mundaka* Up. III. 1.6).

The Atman, he says, is to be realised through truth—satyena labhyah (*Mundaka Up.* III. 1. 5). And with supreme confidence he declares :

Satyam eva jayate nānṛitam.
Truth alone triumphs and not untruth.
(*Mundaka* Up. III. 1.6).

Truth in its moral sense is truthfulness, integrity; in a metaphysical sense it signifies reality, and Satya becomes Sat. Satya applies to conduct; Sat is an object of search, of knowledge or realisation and vision. Hence the Upanishadic prayer : 'Lead me from unreality (*asat*) to reality (*sat*).' (*Brihadāraṇyaka,* I. 3. 28). But Sat as a metaphysical entity is abstruse and mystical. Sometimes a sage makes a modest inquiry :

Unknowing I ask of those who know—the sages—
as one ignorant for the sake of knowledge :
What was that One in the form of the Unborn ?
(*R.* I. 164.6).[2]

The question persists even in worship :
'Who is the Deity we shall adore with our oblation ?'
(*R.* X. 121).[3]

The sage of the *Yajur Veda* records his vision of Sat, in which the universe is united as men in the home. (Y. VS. 32. 8).[4] Sage to sage, the knowledge passes like the information about an unknown land from traveller to traveller :

One ignorant of the land asks of one who knows it ;
he travels forward, instructed by the knowing one.
(*R.* X. 32.7).[5]

1. No. 290; 2. No. 88; 3. Nos. 1, 89; 4. No. 85; 5. No. 52.

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1. No. 290; 2. No. 88; 3. Nos. 1, 89; 4. No. 85; 5. No. 52.

A traveller who has yet a long way to go may, with just modesty, remain silent about *Sat,* the Reality. One may even adopt with Buddha the attitude of reserve regarding the Ultimate Reality. But with Satya, truth, it is different. Satya is our concern at every moment of life. The Vedic sage has contemplated a state beyond Sat and Asat, reality and unreality : 'Then (at the beginning) there was neither unreality (Asat) nor reality (Sat)' (*Rg.* X. 129. 1).[1] But truth as a value of life is abiding and ultimate. 'By truth is the earth upheld,' says the *Rig Veda.* (*Rg.* X. 85. 1. also *Ath.* XIV. 1. 1.) 'Quicken truth'—Satyam jinva—says the *Yajur Veda.* A sage of the Upanishad begins his spiritual disquisition by asserting, 'Satyam Vadishyāmi,' 'I will speak the truth.'

2. ORDER (ṚITA)

(a) *The ethical aspect of Rita*

The first essential of Dharma, then, is Truth. The second is *Ṛita,* Eternal Order, Eternal Law. The word is obsolete in modern times, but its negative *anṛita* (*Rg.* I. 105. 6), meaning, literally, disorder or chaos, has been used from ancient times as the negative of truth. In its moral aspect Rita is cognate with truth. '*Rita and Satya*' are spoken of by the *Rig Veda* as being 'born in the beginning of things out of perfect spiritual ardour.' (*Rg.* X. 110. 1). As Satya upholds the earth, so does Rita uphold the heavens. (*R.* X. 85 1.). In the offering of the Soma libation the sage speaks of Soma as 'declaring Law (Rita), splendid by Law (Rita), truth-speaking, truthful in action (*R.* IX. 113. 4).[2] We must praise "Eternal Order" (Ṛitam śamsantah) and think in a straight way' (*R.* X. 67. 2).[3]

Ṛita, in its moral aspects, however, is wider than truth ; it includes justice and goodness, and is almost

1. No. 61; 2. No. 290; 3. No. 225.

synonymous with Dharma as an ethical concept. So Ṛita is opposed to evil, and the opposition is severe; therefore it is spoken of as 'stern and fierce' (*ugram*).[1] It has been said: 'The wicked tread not the path of Eternal Law' (Ṛita) (*R.* IX. 73.6).[2]

The following is addressed to Bṛihaspati, who rides the awful car of Ṛita, destroying evil:

> Having chased the wicked ones and darkness
> Thou mountest Thy refulgent car of order (Ṛita),
> The awful car, O Bṛihaspati! that subdues the foe,
> Slays the wicked, cleaves the stall and brings the light.
> (*R.* II. 23. 3).[3]

(*b*) *Ṛita as Cosmic Order.*

Ṛita, like Satya, forms an essential part of the conception of the Divinity. A god is 'Ṛitavan,' a goddess Ṛitāvarî,' Guardian of the Law. Here Ṛita has a wider implication than morality; it stands for cosmic order too,—for the immutable law of nature, by which the universe becomes systematised and integrated and avoids chaos and confusion. 'Gods chant the song of Ṛita,' says the Veda (*R.* I. 147, 1). In one verse the Divinity is identified with Ṛita. (*R.* IV. 40. 5, also *Y. VS* X. 24).[4] As on the moral plane Ṛita leads to the triumph of good over evil, so on the cosmic plane it leads to the triumph of light over darkness. It is said of Indra that—

> He, shining, caused to shine what shone not,
> by Law (Ṛita) he lighted up the dawns.
> He moves with steeds yoked by Eternal Order (Ṛita),
> making man happy by the chariot-nave that finds the light.
> (*R.* VI 39. 4).[5]

There is, then, a co-ordination between natural law and moral law. Good life, which is life lived according to Ṛita as moral Law, is cognate with the cosmic law governing nature. 'We will follow the path of goodness

1. No. 222; 2. No. 291; 3. No. 100; 4. No. 120; 5. No. 124.

like the sun and the moon,' says a Rig Vedic sage.[1] Happiness comes from treading this path. 'Lead us beyond all pain and grief,' so runs a prayer, 'along the path of eternal law (Ṛita)' (*R.* X. 133.6).

The man of faith is really one who has understood and accepted the Eternal Law (Ṛita); and the atheist is one who does not believe in the eternal values, and does not stand for goodness and oppose evil, according to Eternal Law. Vṛitra whom Indra destroys is the power of darkness and evil, who obstructs the working of Ṛita. The Dāsa and Dasyu are 'followers of evil laws, inhuman (*anyavrata, amānusha*)' (*R.* X. 22. 8, VIII. 70. 11).[2] What is revelation but the awareness of the working of Eternal Law in nature and life?

> Some have said, 'There is no Indra. Who has seen him? Whom shall we worship?'
>
> 'I exist, O singer! Look at me here. All that exists I surpass in grandeur. The commandments of Eternal Law (Ṛita) make me mighty. When I rend, I rend the worlds asunder.' (*R.* VIII. 100. 3-4).[3]

The sceptic who complains of not having seen Indra is asked to see him *here* (*iha*)—in the universe itself, through the splendour and the order resulting from the working of the Law, and the severity of the moral rule.

(c) *The aesthetic aspect of Rita*

Ṛita that reduces chaos to cosmos, and gives order and integration to matter also gives it symmetry and harmony. Hence the conception of Ṛita has an aesthetic content too; it implies splendour and beauty. For example, when in obedience to Law the rains break, the 'fountains' that 'bubbling, stream forward' are 'young virgins skilled in Law' (*R.* IV. 19. 7).[4] Nature becomes beautiful through conformity to Law. The lovely Dawn (Usha) 'true to Eternal Order,' is 'sublime by Law' (*R.* V. 80. 1)[5]; 'the youthful Maiden breaks not the laws

1. No. 216; 2. No. 257; 3. No. 136; 4. No. 134; 5. No. 113.

of Eternal Order by coming day to day to her tryst' (*R.* I, 123. 9).[1]

So Ṛita that holds together the cosmos through natural law is the discipline of life through moral law; and it is also the discipline of form that makes beauty.

> Firm-seated are Eternal Law's foundations.
> In its fair form are many splendid beauties.
> (*R.* IV. 23. 9).[2]

It is for this reason that the Vedic Gods, upholding Ṛita, are all lawful, and beautiful and good. Their beauty is a significant attribute. Terms implying beauty like śrî (beauty, splendour), bhargas (glory), vapus (beautiful form), väma (lovely). cäru (beautiful), citra (wonderful) are frequently used for the Deities.

In the following verse there is a vision of Agni as the beautiful One :

> O wonderful One, O Lord of wonders!
> Give us what is most wonderful, life-giving.
> O bright One, with Thy brightness, give to Thy singer
> great wealth, brilliant, with many heroes.
> (*R.* VI. 6. 7.).[3]

Similarly, Varuna represents the beautiful form (rüpa) that lies behind the cosmic order :

> He, the supporter of the world of Life,
> who knows the secret names of the beams of the dawn,
> He, Poet (Kavi), cherishes manifold forms (rüpa) by
> his poetic power (kävya).
> (*R.* VIII. 41. 5).[4]

Of Indra it is said that 'He is beautiful as the heaven to look on' and is 'an active dancer' who attracts by beauty (śri) *R.* VI. 29. 3).[5]

The beauty created by Indra through the application of cosmic order is spoken of in the following verses :

1. No. 109; 2. No. 227; 3. No, 122; 4. No. 138; 5. No. 133.

'Thou who by Eternal Law (Dharman) hast spread about flowering and seed-bearing plants, and streams of water,
Thou who hast generated the matchless lightning in the sky,
Thou, vast, encompassing vast realms, art a fit subject for our song.'

(*R.* II. 13. 7).[1]

The æsthetic approach to reality illustrates the highest refinement of the mind and the finest culture. And what delicate moral impressions on character must be produced by the representation of the beauty and charm of young womanhood in terms of divine grace and holiness! On every sensitive mind the imagery must imprint itself in all its sacredness and sublimate the conception of womanhood beyond anything that moral exhortations and prohibitions can achieve. There arise before us visions of Ushas as 'the noble lady' (*R.* I. 48. 5), as one 'who goes like a maiden in pride of beauty, smiling, youthful, brightly shining' (*R.* I. 123. 10), as one 'who is lovely as a bride adorned by her mother' (*R.* I. 123, 11), as the Beauty who 'as if conscious that her limbs are bright like one who has bathed, stands up for us to see her' (*R.* V. 80.5), as 'the Daughter of the sky, bending opposite to men like a virtuous maiden' (*R.* V. 80.6), as one 'who like a dancer enrobes herself with her embroidered garments' (*R.* I. 92, 4), as the Maiden who 'bending down, clothed in a red form, is seen advancing as one wonderful' (*R.* VIII. 101. 13), and as 'the Goddess, the bringer of light, whom poets welcome with the singing of hymns' (*R.* V. 80, 1). To Ushas, the Maiden, the poets wish to be 'as sons to the mother' (*R.* VII. 81. 4).[2]

The beauty of Ushas is the beauty of the maiden, the beauty of Sarsvatî is that of the mother. And not only has the woman's loveliness been enshrined in the portraiture of the Goddess, but it has also been evoked through simile or metaphor to illustrate divine attributes. There are fine vignettes of mother and child in

1. No. 135; 2. Nos. 108-119.

the references to 'the mother bending to feed her child' (*R.* III. 33. 10), of 'the mother kissing her child and the child returning the kiss' (*R.* X. 114. 4), of 'babes in arms reposing on their mother' (*R.* VII. 43, 3), of 'playful children, whose mothers are handsome :' 'śiśūlā na krilayah sumātarāh'* (*R.* X. 78, 6)[1].

By revealing the beauty that lies at the core of the cosmic order (*R.* IV. 23, 9),[2] the Vedic sages uplifted the mind of man to unimaginable heights. And in a way that only very modern minds can properly understand, the hold on the æsthetic also stabilised the fundamentals of character and right living more durably than mere moral preaching could do. One who learnt to admire the divine beauty of the woman did not need the ordinary social taboos to keep him straight in his moral character. For the woman also there is not much by way of exhortation to virtue : but beautiful pictures present the ideal for all times. For example, speaking of the purity of the Deity, the sage says that He is 'like the irreproachable wife beloved of her husband' (*R.* I. 73. 3).[3] So, in the eyes of the Veda there is divine purity in the chaste wife.

In a succession of verses, Savitā is implored to 'send far away all evil,' and 'send what is good :' then he is asked to grant 'all things that are beautiful, and then he is spoken of as one 'whose power is in truth' (*R.* V. 82. 5—7).[4] Thus the Deity is understood in terms of goodness, beauty and truth—the three ultimate values. Ushas, the beautiful One, 'obedient to the reins of Order (Rita),' is implored to send 'thoughts that are more and more blissful' (*R.* I. 123. 13).[5] Thus beauty, an aspect of Rita as cosmic law, is, so, to speak, only the obverse of Rita as moral law. So form as beauty (Rūpa) and

*The following calls up a picture of father and child :
'I grasp Thy garment's hem as a child grasps its father's,'
(*Rg.* III. 53. 2), No. 19.

1. No. 165; 2. No. 227; 3. No. 31; 4. Nos. 103-5; 5. No. 112.

form as morality (Dharma) are harmonised by the contemplation of a universal (brihat) order (Ṛita).

(d) Ṛita as Rite

The term Ṛita has also been applied to the Vedic ritual. It has been observed that Ṛita is *rite* as well as *right*. As a ritual Ṛita signifies the orderly performance of the ceremonial part of the worship which is a complicated form of action, and therefore possesses the attributes of art. So like the æsthetic form, the form of the Yajna also conforms to laws of order. And the order observed at the ritual is a symbol of Eternal Order, including the eternal statutes of moral life. The Deity ot the ritual, Soma is invoked in the following words :

> O Purifier !
> driving off the lawless, looking at the light.
> Sit in the place of the sacred rite (Ṛita)
> (*R.* IX. 13. 9).

'Let not the licentious enter the place of worship', (*ṛita*) says another verse (*R.* VII, 21. 5).[1] The Soma libations flowing 'in streams of Ṛita,' are asked "to glorify the Deity as they make the whole world noble (*Arya*) and drive away the lawless' (*R.* IX. 63. 5).[2] Ṛita uplifts the spirit :

> 'Ascending the lofty heights of Order (Ṛita) the bands of singers sip the sweets of immortality.'
> (*R.* X. 123. 3).

The earth is sweet to the man who lives by Law (ṛitäyate) (*R.* I. 90. 6-8)[3].

It is interesting to note that while Ṛita as cosmic and moral law is understood to be immutable Ṛita as ritual is expected to vary with time and to be renewed to suit the human desire for change : 'Navyo jäyatäm ṛitam ; let the new ritual grow' (*R.* I. 105. 15).[4]

(e) Ṛita as Social Order.

In the Vedas every God or Goddess is spoken of as the protector of Ṛita, the cosmic order. More particularly

1. No. 292; 2. No. 260; 3. No. 228; 4. No. 288.

certain Deities are described as Kings who are guardians of Ṛita, and as Kshatriyas—protectors and rulers Mitra and Varuna have been spoken of as such :

> Upholders of Eternal Order (Ṛita).
> Powerful, they have sat them down for sovereignty (samräjya) :
> Rulers (Kshatriyas) whose laws stand fast :
> They have obtained their sway (Kshatra).
> (*R.* VIII. 25-8).[1]

The emissaries of Varuna, 'upholders of Eternal Law, 'survey both the worlds,' and 'inspire the praise-songs of noble-minded poets' (*R.* VII. 87.3).[2] The sinner is caught in the noose of Varuna.

The earthly king makes Mitra and Varuna his models. Like them he wants to be an upholder of order (Ṛita) as applied to social life ; he, therefore, calls himself a Kshatriya. In the *Yajur Veda* the king while receiving consecration is told :

> Thou art Mitra, thou art Varuna .
> (Y. VS. X. 16).

The Kshatriya, being a protector and a defender, is necessarily a fighter, too. The Deity who represents the ideal of the fighter as well as the giver of law, is typically Indra. In Him the spirit of Kshatra finds its widest application :

> Great art Thou, mighty Lord, through valour,
> obtaining wealth, O fierce One, conquering the foes ;
> Thyself alone the King of the whole universe,
> such as Thou art, Thou causest battle and peace.
> (*R.* III. 46. 2).[3]

'I deem Thee, Indra, as the Banner of heroes,' sings the sage, 'I deem Thee as the Chief of the people' (*R.* VIII. 96. 4).

There is a stirring call to the people to be heroic after the manner of Indra :

Indram sakhäyo anuvîrayadhvam. (*R.* X. 103. 6).[4]

'Çomrades, quit you like heroes, after the example of Indra.' 'Heaven and earth bow before Him ; before

1. No. 254; 2. No. 149; 3. No. 144; 4. No. 199.

His might the mountains tremble.' (*R.* II. 12, 13).[1] A great hero, He is also merciful. But His grace comes out of His might :

> Śavasā dakshināvān—" graceful through power."
> (*R.* VI. 29.3).[2]

In Soma, who has also been described as King, the ideal of Dakshiṇā or grace has found fine expression :

> He clothes all those who are naked (*nagna*).
> He doctors all those who are diseased ;
> Through Him the blind man sees, the cripple walks.
> (*R.* VIII. 79. 2).[3]

Vishnu, 'the Upholder of eternal statutes (Dharmāṇi), the Protector (Gopā)' (*R.* I. 22. 18),[4] is also a typical representative of the ideal of royal and divine grace. There are His 'three places, filled with sweetness, and imperishable joy with holy bliss (*svadhā*)' (*R.* I. 154. 4).[5]

The earthly king becomes a Kshatriya, protector, by applying his Kshatra, ruling power, to society, as the Divine Kings apply their ruling power to the universe in accordance with Ṛita.*

Ṛita and Fate

The ideal of society is to translate the order (Ṛita) of the cosmos into social order. Like the Greek conception of Fate, Ṛita is independent of the will of the gods. But the Greeks found in Fate a power which even the gods could not withstand, which was arbitrary, and which foreordained the course of mortal life beyond the capacity of anybody to alter it. This led to the typical Greek conception of Tragedy—that man was a helpless victim of Fate. In India, however, Ṛita never became foreordination ; it remained Eternal Law and Eternal Justice. As a result, however, of the working of Eternal

* The ancient Persian king's name, Artaxerxes, is found to be the same as 'Ṛitakshatra.'

1. No. 137; 2. No. 133; 3. No. 7; 4. No. 141; 5. No. 142.

Justice there could be no escape from the consequences of our deeds : a man must reap as he sows. So the conception of stern Ṛita led to the doctrine of Karma. With the detailed acceptance of the doctrine of rebirth, every soul was believed to be born with the residue of Karma of previous births (präktana) which, remaining unseen (adṛishta), guided man's present life to happiness or misery according to Eternal Justice. Thus India, too, came near the Greek idea of predetermination. But this was in later ages. In the Vedas there is no predetermination. There is confident faith in man's capacity to follow Ṛita in making order prevail against disorder, cosmos against chaos. The existence of evil is recognized, but it is believed that evil can be fought and fought successfully, within us and without us. Indra's destruction to Vṛitra, the power of darkness and evil, which is opposed in Ṛita, is indicative of the final triumph of goodness and law over evil and disorder. Indra is Vṛitrahantama, 'Supreme among slayers of Vṛitra. Every man has his own Vṛitra to fight ; he can fight him successfully only if he is valiant enough. Thus the Vedic outlook is the heroic or epic outlook on life. Life is hard and there is evil in our midst ; but victory is ours if only we are brave, and follow goodness resolutely.

> The river full of stones flows on ;
> Move together, my comrades !
> Stand erect and cross it.
> Let us leave here those that are evil (aśevāh) ;
> we will cross over
> to powers of goodness (śivān). (*R.* X. 53. 8).[1]

The *Yajur Veda* and the *Atharva Veda* reproduce the verse. The *Atharva Veda* substitutes the expression 'stand erect' (uttishthata) by the more emphatic, 'vîrayaddhvam'—'Quit you like heroes !'

(*f*) *Satya and Ṛita—Brahman and Kshatra*

Satya in the metaphysical as well as the moral sense, and Ṛita in its broad (brihat) sense, covering the cosmic

1. No. 196.

ethical, æsthetic, and social law, as well as the ritual, represent the higher interests of life. Satya stands for the religious-philosophical interest, and Ṛita, in its typical sense, for the moral-political interest. The *Rig Veda* speaks of the threefold interests of life :

> Strengthen the power of knowledge
> (Brahman) and strengthen intellects ;
> Strengthen the ruling power (Kshatra)
> and strengthen heroes,
> Give strength to the milch-cow and
> strengthen the people.
>
> (*R.* VIII. 35. 16-18).[1]

Of these Brahman, corresponding to Truth, represents the cultural force ; Kshatra, corresponding to Ṛita, represents the political power, and the milch-cow (paśu or pecus, wealth) represents the economic force of society. Three types of men emerge—the Brāhmaṇa, the philosophic man ; the Kshatriya, the political man ; and the Vaiśya, the common man. While the last will produce the wealth of the nation, the second will work for order and security and the first will carry on the intellectual and spiritual enterprise. But while the last group needs protection, special effort is to be directed to the encouragement of the first two groups of society. So the *Yajur Veda* insists :

> Brahma dṛingha, kshatram dṛingha :
> Strengthen the power of knowledge,
> Strengthen the political power.
>
> (Y. VS. VI 3).[2]

Thus Brahman and Kshatra would be found to make up between them the religious and political idealism of Vedic times.

Of the major deities, Agni particularly represents the Brahmana ideal (though he has also been spoken of as King) :

> Agni is Supreme among those who live the holy life. He is the holy Sage (Vipra), the holy Poet (Kavi).
>
> (*R.* VIII. 44. 21).[3]

1. No. 151; 2. No. 270; 3. No. 9.

We have spoken of Varuna, Indra and other Deities as representing the spirit of Kshatra. Indra is the ideal hero :

> He bends not to the strong nor to the firm,
> nor to the defying foe, instigated by the lawless (Dasyu);
> For Indra the lofty mountains are as plains,
> and in the deeps there is a ford for Him.
> (*R.* VI 24. 8).[1]

He is the model (pratimāṇa) for all the world (*R.* II. 12.9).[2]

Two types of virtues are stressed in the Vedas : wisdom and valour, corresponding to Brahman and Kshatra. There are prayers, on the one hand, for intellectual power (dhî), wisdom (kratu), efficiency (daksha), spiritual vigour (varcas), higher talent (medhā), etc :

> Bestow on us the brightest efficiency (daksha)
> (*R.* VI. 44.9).
>
> Endow me with spiritual vigour (varcas)
> (*R.* I. 23.24).
>
> Win for us wisdom (medhā), win the light
> (*R.* IX. 9.9).
>
> O God ! may my intelligence (dhî) be active
> (*R.* X. 42-3).
>
> Arouse our intelligence (dhî)
> (*R.* III. 62, 10 ; Y. VS. 36.3 ; *Sam.* 1462).
>
> O Varuna ! sharpen the intelligence (dhî), wisdom (kratu)
> and insight (daksha) of him
> who is striving for enlightenment
> (*R.* VIII. 42.3).
>
> O Agni ! make us shine brightly like fire
> produced by friction
> (*R.* VIII. 48.6).
>
> Sharpen us like the barber's razor
> (*R.* VIII. 4.16).[3]

On the other hand, there are prayers for strength (Śavas), valour (Virya), manliness (Nṛimna), spiritual power (Ojas), conquering power (Sahas), wrath (Manyu), fearlessness (Abhaya), vigour (Bala) and other qualities of heroism :

> O Hero ! give manly vigour (śavas)
> to our men (*R.* X. 148.4).[4]

1. No. 201 ; 2. No. 67 ; 3. Nos. 42-43; 4. No. 192.

So Thou Hero! urge us to heroic power (virya) (*R.* IX. 110.7).
Powerful Lord! give manliness to our bodies, and ever-conquering valour (*S.* 231).
I pray for soul-force (ojas) which none can bend (*R.* III. 62.5).
Give strength (bala) to our bodies (*R.* III. 53.18).
In the friendship of Thee, the [1] valiant, we shall neither fear nor tire (*R.* VIII. 4.7).[2]
Make us erect in our walk and our life (*R.* I. 36.14).[3]
May our bodies be stone (*Ath.* I. 2.2).
Thou art Wrath, give us wrath;
Thou art conquering Power, give us conquering power (*Y.* VS. 19.9).[4]
Go forward, ye heroes! and conquer (*R.* X. 103.13).[5]
May we conquer when we war (*R.* IX. 61.24).
Raise us, O Indra, to sublime renown (*R.* VIII. 70.9).
May we subdue the fiends (*R.* X. 132.2).[6]
May the four regions bow before me (*R.* X. 128.1).

There is, however, an essential harmony between the two ideals, as found in the following prayers:

Fight, warrior, strong in truth (*R.* X. 112.10).[6]
Prayer (Brahman) is my internal coat of mail (*R.* VI. 75.19).[7]
Divine grace (śarman) is my internal coat of mail
.... (*S.* 1872).[7]

There is a union of both the qualities:

(Gods) made me far-reaching, mighty thinker, sovereign lord (*R.* X. 128.9).

In the following prayer the same person wants to be the ideal Brāhmaṇa and Kshatriya:

Wilt Thou not make me guardian of the people, make me their king, O impetuous Indra!

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1. No. 195; 2. No. 202; 3. Under No. 196; 4. No. 203; 5. No. 197; 6. Under No. 256 7. No. 262.

Wilt Thou not make me a sage (Ṛishi)
who has drunk of Soma ?
Wilt Thou not make me controller of
wealth that lasts for ever (*amṛita*) ?
(*R.* III. 43 5).[1]

Social organization would be perfect when the two powers, Brahman and Kshatra, would work in harmony:

Where Brahman and Kshatra both
move together in concord,
That world I shall know as one of bliss,
where Gods with Agni dwell.
(*Y.* VS. XX. 25).[2]

3. *Consecration (Dîkshä)*

The four remaining principles of Dharma, consecration, austerity, prayer and ritual, come generally under the category of Brahman, the philosophical-religious interest. The first two of these, consecration and austerity, are chiefly directed at the realization of Satya, or Ultimate Truth. These refer to detailed systems of self-culture for spiritual advancement. The following progressive stages in spiritual realization are indicated in the *Yajur Veda* :

By self-dedication (Vrata) one obtains
consecration (Dîkshä) ;
By consecration one obtains grace (Dakshinä) ;
By grace one obtains reverence (Śraddhä)
and by reverence is Truth (Satya) obtained
(*Y.* VS. XIX. 30).[3]

Consecration is not merely a formal initiation. There is a deep personal contact between the teacher (Acharya) and the pupil under instruction (Śishya). While giving the initiation, the Acharya, so says the *Atharva Veda,* carries the pupil within him, so to speak, as the mother carries the foetus in her womb and after the symbolic three days of the Vrata, the pupil is born a wonder whom the Gods in a body come to see (*Ath.* XI. 5.3).[4] This initiation, therefore, is the path of transition from darkness to light, from humanity to divinity, from un-

1. No. 252; 2. No. 270; 3. No. 58; 4. No. 48.

truth to truth. The prayer of the intending initiate is significant :

> Agni, Lord of Vrata ! I will observe the Vrata :
> here I approach truth across untruth.
> (Y. VS. 1.5).

What is the good of the instruction that the Acharya gives to the disciple ? Instruction is like the guidance that a man who knows a land gives to one who is a stranger to it :

> One ignorant of the land asks of one who knows it ;
> he travels forward, instructed by the knowing one.
> This, indeed, is the blessing of instruction (Anushasana),
> one finds the path that leads straight onward.
> (*R.* X. 32.7).[1]

Every one by himself could conceivably grope his way to some amount of knowledge, but being under instruction one receives guidance and goes directly forward. This not only establishes the necessity of instruction but also states its nature : that it is like the guidance to a traveller who is actuated by a desire to visit and see the land. The initiative, therefore, lies with the pupil. He is not a passive recipient, but an active agent in the acquisition of knowledge.

4. *Austerity* (*Tapas*)

The path to higher life is the path of constant and hard striving. One wins intellectual and spiritual enlightenment through the sweat of one's brow. What applies to the performance of the ritual also applies generally to spiritual life :

Na ṛite śrāntasya, sakhyāya devāh : Gods befriend none but him who has toiled (*R.* IV. 33. 11.).[2]

'The sleepless Ones (atandrāh) punish indolence' (*R.* VIII. 2. 18).[2] 'Never may sleep or idle talk sway us,' goes the prayer (*R.* VIII. 48.14).[3] Tapas is the unflagging, unsparing effort in the achievement of higher things ; the infinite pains one has to take to do something really worth while. Tapas lies at the beginning of all great things. Truth and order, it is said, were born at the beginning out of perfect spiritual ardour

1. No. 52; 2. No. 210; 3. No. 209;

(Tapas).[4] Gods and sages perform noble things through Tapas.[5]

The Tapas par excellence at the beginning of life is the discipline for the student of Vedic learning (Brahman) known as Brahmacharya—the way of obtaining Vedic knowledge primarily, and that of education and culture in a general sense. The *Atharva Veda* describes the character of the Brahmachari in detail (*Ath.* XI. 5). 'He satisfies the Acharya by Tapas.' 'The Brahmachari with his sacred wood (Samidh), sacred belt (Mekhalä) and his labour, satisfies the world.' 'He stands high, clad in spiritual light, with his Tapas.' The young boy takes up the intellectual and spiritual career and after some twenty-four years, the mature youth comes back to society in his new garb and his new power. 'The Brahmachari comes perfected by the Samidh (spiritual practices by burning the sacred wood), clad in the black antelope's skin, consecrated (dikshita), wearing long beard : he quickly comes (like the sun) from the eastern to the northern sea, and assembling the people he forthwith establishes himself.' The creative energy conserved by him during the long period of continence is used on the spiritual plane : animated by his creative vigour 'the four quarters live.'

So all who would live worthily must be Brahmacharis. 'The king protects the state (räshtra) through the Tapas of Brahmacharya. The Acharya desires to have his pupil through Brahmacharya.' 'The maiden obtains a youthful husband through Brahmacharya.' And Brahmacharya lies at the centre of divinity. 'The Shining Ones turned away death by the Tapas of Brahmacharya. Indra, verily, brought light to the Devas through Brahmacharya.'[1] The Brahmachari, having bathed (snätah), bright and resplendent, shines greatly on the earth.[2]

Brahmacharya, as suggested above, is the discipline

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4. Under No. 222; 5. No. 49.

1. No. 49; 2. A 'Snätaka' of ancient India corresponds to the modern graduate.

of body and mind for attaining the fitness for Vedic knowledge. Much stress was laid on the control and sublimation of the sex energy. Physical cleanliness was meticulously attended to. The life in the open, outside the common human habitations, in sunlight and fresh air, and bathing in rivers and lakes, plain food, hard work, both physical and intellectual, the performance of the fire ritual, hard bed, early rising, and constant personal supervision by the Acharya contributed to Spartan virtues. But the Brahmachari did not grow like a hermit secluded from society; he took his almost daily round of the neighbouring village begging his up-keep, and usually meeting the mistress of the household with 'Madam, give me alms.' A filial attitude was cultivated towards women. Again, the Brahmachari was the worshipper of Saraswati, the Divine Mother, at whose breast he prayed to be privileged to feed.[1] As a rule the Acharya was a married man and lived with his family and the Brahmachari was adopted into it.

In the Vedas the ideal of Brahmacharya stood for a preparation for life and not ordinarily for the entire life of man. Just as in the social life the ideal of Brahman was co-ordinated with that of Kshatra, so in the personal life of individuals the ideal of Brahmacharya was co-ordinated with that of family life (Gärhapatya). As the maiden, as said above, qualified herself through Brahmacharya for a young husband, so did the young man qualify himself for married life and the leadership of a family. It is said of Agastya that 'the powerful sage (Ṛishir ugrah) practised both classes of obligations (ubhau varnau puposha),' viz. practice of Brahmacharya as well as Gärhapatya, and received true benedictions from the Devas (*R*. I. 179.6). The Acharya described in the *Atharva Veda* as practising Brahmacharya must have been a sage like Agastya practising Gärhapatya too in the orderly life regulated according to *Ṛita*. As Lopamudra, the wife of Agastya, says :

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1. No. 20.

The ancient sages who preached the Eternal Law and conversed of eternal statutes (ṛitani) with the Devas, begot progeny, and did not thereby arrive at the end (of their life of Tapas). (*R*. I. 179.2).

Just as there were two interests in social life, so there were two ways, one succeeding the other, in individual life. Here is the broad foundation of the original conception of Varnashrama Dharma. (In the passage quoted above, the term Varna, however, implies Ashrama). Later on, a return to the forest (Vānaprastha) to resume Brahmacharya was set as the ideal of later life (after fifty), and later still there was the ideal of complete renunciation (Sannyāsa) for the fourth stage of life, though from the earliest times there were men and women who, in their individual way, remained celibates in pursuit of spiritual knowledge. The practice of the last two ideals, however, must have been on a much more limited scale than that of Brahmacharya. It was cults like Buddhism that preached the extremist ideal of exclusive Brahmacharya, in preference to Garhapatya and Kshatra.

Lord Buddha, however, rightly insisted that suffering by itself was of no avail. The Veda, it should be noted, places Tapas after Diksha : after initiation into the higher life all effort becomes constructive effort ; there is no mere self-mortification there.

5. *Brahman*

In its primary sense Brahman means prayer. Then it means the body of mantras in the Vedas meant for prayer. Then the term implies the Vedas as books of prayer and wisdom. There is a Deity, Brahmanaspati, the Lord of Prayer. Brahmacharya means the discipline for the mastery of the Vedas and Vedic knowledge. Then Brahman has stood for the Object of Prayer, the Divinity especially contemplated as an impersonal Reality.

We have referred above to the term Brahman standing for the activities connected with the search for

Reality and Truth, the religious-philosophical spirit from which we get the word Brāhmaṇa, one engaged in the search of Brahman (jnāna-yoga, as we may call it). But the word Brāhmaṇa has also a more specific sense according to the second meaning given above : it means one who knows Brahman or the text of the Veda. It was a marvellous feat in the whole cultural history of the world for the Indians to have preserved the Vedas by oral tradition, taking every care to maintain each syllable of the text unimpaired. It goes to the eternal credit of the people that they understood the high value of the documents and did everything humanly possible to preserve them in the face of terrible upheavals, internal and external, that changed the whole structure of society. The men who carried the Vedas in their heads deserved well of society, and a traditional social law gave them a privileged position in that they were immune from capital punishment. For to kill a Brāhmaṇa would be, perhaps, to obstruct the oral tradition of a Veda carried on by him. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, while describing the benefits of Vedic studies, speaks of the 'protection against capital punishment (avadhyatā),' as one of them (*S.B.* II. 5.7).

Hindu theologians have spoken of the efficacy of the sound of the Vedic hymns (Mantras). Whatever their theological significance, that they are among the most wonderful of rhythmic creations in the whole poetical history of the world cannot be denied.

That the Vedas could be handed down by oral tradition through the ages is due to some extent to the wonderful memorableness of the verses. If, as some think, memorableness is an essential quality of poetry, then, from this criterion alone the Vedic hymns would occupy a very high place in the estimation of the world.

6. *Yajna*

Yajna is the Vedic ritual of offering libation or oblation on the sacrificial fire, lighted on an altar. Another ritual was the offering of Soma juice. Whatever the names of the Deities worshipped, the ritual was the same. The Vedic ritual was picturesque, accompanied by chanting, singing (Sāma hymns were musically rendered) and also acting. There was the simple domestic sacrifice (Agnihotra) ; there were also great seasonal sacrifices held in open spaces and attended by vast numbers of people. Political colouring was given to the ritual by the institutions of Ashvamedha (which used to be preceded by a challenge to the neighbouring States to a tournament at arms) and Rajasūya (which was utilised by emperors to obtain homage from their vassals).

Being a great public institution the Yajna developed complicated rituals that added to the attractiveness of the ceremonial side of prayer. In course of time, therefore, it needed a class of experts from among Brāhmanas, the knowers of the Vedas, to carry on the ritual with the appropriate ceremony. This formal part of the worship began to be known as Karmakāṇḍa, the 'action part' of the religion. When in later times the Vedic language became obsolete and the meaning could not be understood by the worshipper, the formal character of the Yajna became very much pronounced. And curiously enough the whole of the Vedic texts (Samhitas) came to be regarded as part of the Karmakāṇḍa, having no relation to the spiritual or metaphysical questions! In the circumstances the mastery of the four Vedas and the accessory literature was considered to be a sort of practical and material (Aparā) knowledge, as distinguished from the metaphysical approach to the Ultimate Reality (Parā) through thought and experience (*Muṇḍaka Upanishad,* 1. 5).

It is natural that in a society with freedom of thought and expression there should be opposition to

mere formalism. So the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, standing for spiritualism to the total exclusion of formalism, says :

They are frail rafts in the form of *Yajnas* ; in them, with the eighteen members, the work is of an inferior type.

(*Mun.* I. 2. 7).

Again, the attitude of the Bhakti (Devotion) cult (in which Divine grace is the only source of spiritual advancement) is well indicated in the *Bhagavad Gita.* The direct experience of the Divine 'cannot be had by (memorising) Vedas, by Yajnas, by (religious) studies, by charity,—not by actions, nor by severe austerities (Tapas).' But this is not a later idea. We find similar expressions in the Veda. For example :

No one by work (Karma) attains Him
who works and strengthens ever more ;
No, not by Yajnas (na yajnair) (can one attain) Indra,
praised of all, resistless, valiant, bold in might.
(*R.* VIII. 70. 3).[1]

The conception of Yajna was much widened by the adoption of five systems of 'great Yajnas,' in which, in addition to the usual Agnihotra, the study and teaching of Vedas (Brahmayajna), service of the guest (Nṛiyajna), giving food to lower creatures (Bhûtayajna), and service of or offering of oblation to Manes (Pitṛiyajna), were recognised as great Yajnas (Mahäyajna). The *Bhagavad Gita,* in its own remarkable way, distinguishes the spirit of Yajna from its forms. If the spirit is accepted then the material part of Yajna, related to the fire, fuel, and the oblation, may be taken not only literally but also symbolically and figuratively. If so, then the Yajna of the Karmakända would be material Yajna ; but there will also be the Yajna of Tapas (spiritual discipline) in which the fire of restraint is lighted and the senses (or sensual pleasures) are the offering ; there will be the Yajna of Yoga in which the vital functions will be the offering into the fire of self-control ; and there will be the Yajna of sacred studies (Brahma-

1. No. 297.

yajna) and the Yajna of *jnäna,* knowledge, in which Brahman—the Supreme Reality—is fire, fuel and oblation as well as sacrificer, for men of spiritual discipline and self-dedication. If this wider meaning of Yajna is taken, then it must be admitted, in the same wider sense, that (as the followers of the Karmakända claim) 'the eaters of the ambrosia of the remains of Yajna go to the changeless Eternal.' There should then not only be no opposition to Yajna but Yajna must be accepted as the central thing in the discipline for higher life :

Even this world is not for the man without Yajna, what to speak of any other. (*B. G.* Ch. IV, 31).

Even in the Veda we find Yajna taken in the figurative sense. The *Yajur Veda* says that 'life prospers through Yajna (spirit of sacrifice).'

Even the ritual of Yajna—the Karmakända—prospers through Yajna (spirit of sacrifice) :

Yajno yajnena kalpatäm—May Yajna (ritual) prosper through Yajna (spirit of sacrifice). (*Yajur.* VS. IX. 21).

The spiritualisation of the concept of Yajna is quite in keeping with the Indian system of thought. The institution of Yajna as ritual, however, had specialities of its own. It emphasised, for one thing, the realistic elements of the Vedic religion. Just as, in contrast with the way of the ascetic (Muni) which is austere and silent, there is the way of the sage (Rishi) who expresses himself through poetry, music and oratory, so in contrast with the non-ritualistic spiritual strivings of the Yogi who seeks the Eternal through supersensual paths, there is the way of Karmakända (ritual), where colour and sound and fragrance and all the other finer things of the senses have their full play. The glorious lustre of the blazing fire, the sweet perfume of the burnt ghee, the blades of grass, the cooked offering, the crushed Soma and all the other material of Yajna had their direct and purifying effect on the minds of the worshippers.

And the acting of the priests, the chanting and the music, and the mass action in making the final offering —these carried an immediacy of appeal which was of no small spiritual value.

The Vedic age delighted in forms and ceremonies. It may be asked : Is form altogether unnecessary ? Has it no relation to the spirit ?

The Vedas do not think so. The *Rig Veda* has an interesting paradox :

Ätmä pitus tanur väsa ojodā abhyanjanam.

(*R.* VIII 3. 24.)

"Food is soul, the apparel is the body, and the unguent is the giver of spiritual vigour."

One who accepted this would say with Walt Whitman—

'What is the soul if the body is not the soul ?'

B. *Vedic Realism*

Ascetics have gone the way of starving the body to feed the soul. But the realist who feels the joy of life, would feed the body to make the soul strong.

If this is so, is spirituality only seeing with the soul ? The Veda has said that 'the wise see with the spirit and the mind':

Hridä paśyanti manasä vipaścitah. (*R.X.* 177. 1)

But is it not glorious to see with the bodily eyes too, and feel with the body things that uplift and ennoble ? A sage in the *Rig Veda* prays,

Give sight to our eyes,
Give sight to our bodies that they may see.
May we survey and discern this world.
May we look on Thee, Surya,
the most lovely to behold,
see well with the eyes of men.

(*R.* X. 158. 4.5).[1]

'That Eye as it rises before us, God-ordained,' so runs another verse, 'we will see for a hundred years,

1. No. 178.

and we will live for a hundred years' (*Rg.* VII 66. 16).[1]
The *Yajur Veda* adds to this verse :

And we will hear for a hundred years,
and speak for a hundred years.
And we will hold our heads high for
a hundred years,
Yea, even more than a hundred years. (Y. VS. 36.24).[2]

The realistic ideal of life is that of a perfect body and a perfect mind. (*Atharva Veda* XIX 60. 1-2)[3]
This leads to the striving after perpetual youth :

'We will be ever youthful (ajara) in Thy friendship', says a *Rig-Vedic* sage addressing Indra. (VII 54.2.)

For Indra is 'our youthful friend' ever youthful :

Years do not age Him.
Nor months nor days wear out Indra. (VI. 24.7).[4]

Has not the sage known the Atman also, 'who is satisfied with Rasa (the joy-giving essence of things) and is not wanting in anything,' as 'serene, ageless and youthful'? (Ātmānaṁ dhīram ajaraṁ yuvānam) (*Ath.* X. 8. 44).[5]

In the mythologies, both Hindu and Greek, we read much about heaven ; but in the Vedas there is scanty reference to the world to come (Cf. *R.* IX. 113.7-11).[6] The Vedas interpret the beauty and glory of the earth and the wonder of life. The great paean to the Earth in the *Atharva Veda* (XII. 1) is one of the most magnificent poetic expressions on the subject in world literature.[7]

'This world is the most beloved of all :' 'ayam lokaḥ priyatamaḥ,' says the *Atharva Veda,* addressing a diseased man, 'Die not before decrepit age.' (*Ath.* V. 30. 17.) In the following *Rig-Vedic* verse, the enveloping air, which we now know to be an essential condition of the existence of life on the earth, is called upon to bring health and happiness :

May the Air blow His balm,
carrying joy and health (śambhu mayobhu) to our hearts,
May He prolong our lives. (*R.* X. 186.1)[8].

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1. No. 175; 2. No. 176; 3. No. 179; 4. No. 125; 5. No. 86; 6. No. 283; 7. No. 277-80; 8. No. 180.

There is no waiting for a world to come; we must be happy here (iha) and now (adya, idānîm):

Make us today (Adya) enjoyers of wide room and happiness. (*R.* IX. 84.1.)

May we be masters of felicity now (idānîm) (*R.* VII 41.4.)

Death is accepted as a stern fact and is faced bravely and serenely (*e.g. Yajur* XL. 15)[1] but it is insisted one should live the full period of life (which the Vedas put at a hundred years) and live joyfully.[2]

The realist's joy of life is evident in the attitude of worship. The mood of worship in the Vedas is not a gloomy one. Worship, like song and poetry, is an overflow of the joy of the soul:

Agni, the joyous, much beloved........
we worship with joyous hearts
(*R.* VIII. 43.31).[3]

Like joyous streams bursting from the mountain
The hymns of prayer have proceeded to the Deity
(*R.* X. 68.1.)[3]

Another aspect of Vedic Realism is that man is not conceived to be a mean and sinful creature; on the other hand he is conscious of a divinity within himself. 'O Bounteous Ones, we have established now our perpetual brotherhood, with harmony, in the mother's womb,' says a sage in the *Rig Veda*, addressing Gods (VIII. 83.8).[4] The *Atharva Veda*, after describing the creation of man, says that 'having fused the mortal man complete, the Gods entered into him.' (*Ath.* XI. 8.13).[4] So, to be human is to be divine too:

Therefore whoever knows man
regards him as Brahman's self

[Brahmeti manyate (*Ath.* XI. 8.32)][5]

To others, God is in His heaven; to the Vedic Realist, God is in the universe: Paśya meha—'See Me here'—is the revelation.[6] He is also in the homes as well as in the heart of man. The home of man that is ruled by the master and mistress, is really presided over by

1. No. 282; 2. No. 175-77; 3. Under No. 11; 4. No. 10; 5. No. 78; 6. No. 135.

the Deity—Agni—who is addressed as 'Gṛihapati,' Master of the household (*Y*. VS. 2.27). He has also been spoken of as 'the beloved house-friend (*Damunas*), the Guest in the house' (*Rg*. V. 4.5).[1] And there can be divine beauty in the dwelling of man if it is properly built. The bountiful man receives the following blessing :

> To the bountiful may there be the house,
> (lovely) like the lake of lotus,
> Ornamented around, beautiful as the divine mansion.
> (*R*. X. 107.10).[2]

Naturally, the home was regarded with tender feelings.

> Sweet be my going forth from home,
> and sweet be my return to it.
> (*R*. X. 24.6.)[3]

C. *Vedic Collectivism*

Vedic society was based on the collectivistic ideal of life.

First, there is the ideal of conjugal union. Every Yajna required the presence of the master (Pati) and mistress (Patnî) of the household. The marriage hymns in the *Rig Veda*, (X. 85), reproduced in the *Atharva Veda* (Ch. XIV) with interesting supplements, have been the means of consecrating marriage bonds through thousands of years in this country. They give a most idyllic and romantic picture of the conjugal union. The notable features include, firstly, the monogamous ideal. The couple is given the blessing : 'You two live here ; do not separate ; enjoy the full span of life, dancing with sons and grandsons, and enjoying in your own home.' (*R*. X. 85.42). 'Arising in the happy home, you two together, laughing and merry, enjoying with great power (*mahasā*)—you two persons, with good cattle and good sons and a good home, spend the shining mornings' (*Ath*.). Elsewhere in the *Rig Veda* : 'May the married couple with sons and daughters by their side, enjoy the full span of life : both decked with ornaments

1. Under No. 34; 2. No. 246; 3. No. 247.

of gold.' (*R.* VIII. 31.8). *Secondly,* the wife is given equality of status with the husband. She is as much a mistress as he is the master of the house. Rather the wife is made to be the higher authority at home. 'Enter your home, mistress of the house, so that you may be the ruler' (*R.*).[1] She is asked to be the Queen (samrājñi) over her father-in-law and mother-in-law and sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law (*R.*).[2] 'Be thou a queen after reaching your husband's home,' says the *Atharva Veda. Thirdly,* mutual love between husband and wife is contemplated (Uśatî uśantaḥ). The *Rig Veda* says that the bride's father selected for her a husband whom she mentally admired. In the *Atharva Veda,* the bride immediately after the marriage-vow prays for her husband : 'May my husband be long-lived : may he live a hundred years'. The newly-married husband addressing the wife says : 'I am song (sāman), thou art hymn (Rik).[3] He compares himself and his consort to the divine couple : 'I am Heaven, thou art Earth.' The elderly Agastya addressing his wife, Lopämudrä, says : 'In this world we may triumph in many conflicts if we two exert ourselves together' (*R.* I. 179. 3).

There is reference in the Vedas to premarital love. The lover (jära) and the girl in love (järinî) have been mentioned. These terms are used in a simple sense, without any bad odour about them.

The *Atharva Veda* clearly mentions the remarriage of women (*Ath.* IX. 5. 27).[4]

What is most remarkable for a modern man in the Vedic conception of love and marriage and domestic life is the openness and naturalness in the contemplation of the sexual side of life—the total absence of taboo and repression. The mind of the sages is sophisticated enough to weave romantic pictures of love and mutual attraction, but the biological aspect is clearly viewed and expressed with almost scientific objectivity. 'Be a mother of heroic children,' is the blessing to the bride (*R.*). In the *Atharva Veda,* the newly-married husband, after

1. No. 232; 2. No. 234; 3. Under No. 235; 4. Under No. 243.

establishing the poetic relation between the couple, says : 'May we two be of one mind, may we two be parents of children.' Ghoshä, the woman sage, prays before her marriage that she may go to her husband's home, endeared of her husband ; and she also prays for wealth and heroic sons (*R*. X. 40. 12-13). The order of domestic life is under Eternal Order (Ṛita), and hence the marital relations are consecrated. 'May you two', says the *Atharva Veda*, addressing the married couple, 'in the pursuit of Eternal Law (Ṛita), speaking right (Ṛita), enjoy together prosperity and good fortune.' (*A*. XIII. 1.31).

The tender regard for womanhood is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Vedas. The courteous address for a woman is the same as for a Goddess—Subhage ! 'O graceful one !' (*e.g R*. X. 10.12). (The basic word 'bhaga' has been used later for Bhagavän, the Supreme Lord). She is often described as 'Kalyäni,' 'the blissful one (cf. kalyänîm väcam—'the blessed word' Y. V. XXVI)[1]

The woman's smile has been treated as a mark of divine beauty. The mother's kiss for the child is invested with divine loveliness (*R*. X. 114.4).[2] The purity of the chaste wife has been a point of comparison for divine purity (*R*. I. 73.3).[3] Similarly, a comparison for the glorious sacred word appearing spontaneously before the sage-poet has been found in the appearance of the finely-robed loving wife before her husband. (*R*. X. 71.4)[4] There are noble female Deities, like Ushas, Sarasvatî and Aditi and women among the Vedic seers. It is remarkable that in such a remote age woman had an exalted position not reached by her under later civilisation for long ages, either in the East or in the West.

The problem of domestic life is to establish the harmony and concord that exist in Nature through the working of Eternal Order, Ṛita The same is the problem of social life as a whole. In the Vedic ideology

1. See P. 4 and Nos. 274, 300; 2. No. 21; 3. No. 31; 4. No. 95.

the prefix Sam-(Com-) is found to be attached to words indicating the collective actions of people. Similarly Samäna (common) implies a collective relation. Sa- and Saha- also have been used for the idea of union. In the *Atharva Veda* (III. 30) the sage addresses a family group :

> I shall make you of united (Sa-) heart,
> of one (Sam-) mind, free from hate ;
> Be attached to one another like the
> newly born calf to the cow.
> Let the son follow the father in his
> noble endeavour (vrata),
> and be of one mind with the mother ;
> Let the wife speak sweet, peaceful words
> to the husband.
> Let not brother hate brother,
> sister hate sister,
> Be all united (Sam-) and of one (Sa-)
> high purpose (vrata) and speak
> words with courtesy..........
> May your drink be common (Samäna)
> your food be together (Saha).[1]

So, first comes the conjugal union, then the unity of the family. The family is desired to assemble round the sacrificial fire like the spokes of a wheel round the nave (*Ath.*).

From the family, there is the higher step to the society at large. One must not live for oneself alone. 'The solitary eater is the solitary sinner' (*R.* X. 117. 6.)[2] The sombre words in the closing hymn of the ***Rig Veda*** have resounded through the ages :

> Assemble (Sam-), speak in harmony (Sam-),
> May your minds be of one accord (Sam-) ;
> Your prayer (Mantra) be common (Samäna).
> your assembly be common (Samäna) ;
> Common (Samäna) your mind, united (Saha) your
> thoughts
> I counsel you to common (Samäna) purpose,
> and I worship with your
> Common (Samäna) oblation. (*Rg.* X. 191. 2-3).[3]

The common oblation was a visible demonstration of social unity.

1. No. 244; 2. No. 214; 3. No. 271.

In collective life, assemblies play an important part, and the art of speaking is much in demand. Sages pray that they may 'speak loud' in the socio-religious assembly, Vidatha (e.g. *R.* II. 19.9).[1] The newly-married wife is told that she would address the Vidatha.[2] Then there was the Sabha—the political council which required well-qualified people. In the *Yajur Veda* there is a prayer that the Prince should have for his son a 'Sabheya Yuva,' a youth capable of playing his part in the Sabha or political gathering. (*Y. VS.* XXII. 22).[3] The *Rig Veda* speaks of the man who has carried the day in the political assembly., 'All his friends are delighted with the man who has triumphed in the Council and returned in glory' (*R.* X. 71. 10). Elsewhere there is a prayer for the ideal son :

> To the man who offers to him,
> God Soma gives a hero-son (Vīrá)
> Who is fit for work (Karmaṇya),
> fit for the home (Sādanya)
> Fit for the religious assembly (Vidathya),
> fit for the political council (Sabheya),
> And a source of glory to his father.
> (*R.* I. 91. 20).[4]

Here is the ideal for the good citizen. A man must live beyond his individual sphere and contribute to collective life. Beyond the limited interests of the family and the social group there was the wider interest of the state (rashtra), which was the concern of all the enlightened people. Sages in the *Yajur Veda* declare':

'We shall awake in the state, placed in the front line'—vayam rāshtre jāgriyāma purohitāh (*Y.* VS. IX. 23.)[5]

D. *Vedic Universalism*

All the instruction and exhortation of the Vedas are addressed to humanity at large. It is repeatedly asserted that the Deity is common to all :

1. Under No. 268; 2. No. 232; 3. No. 250; 4. No. 269; 5 No. 266.

Samänam Indram avase havāmahe :

We invoke for succour Indra who is common to all
(*R.* VIII. 99. 8)[1]

Indra sädhäraṇas tvam :

* Indra, Thou art common to all (*i.e.* the common Lord of all). (*R.* VIII. 65.7.)[1]

Tväm vishve mänushä yugendra havante :

Thee all races of mankind, Indra !
with uplifted ladles invoke (*R.* VIII. 46.12.)

The sages preached the Vedas to all, at home and abroad. A sage in *Yajur Veda* says :

So may I speak these blessed words
to the people at large (janebhyaḥ)
to the Brahmana and the Kshatriya,
to the Śudra and the Vaishya,
to my own people (sväya) and to the foreigner (araṇäya)

(VS. 26.2)[2] *

Progressing on the way of Brahman—the Vedas and spiritual knowledge—one grows more and more liberal and the vision is widened. The Vedas proceed from

* We find from the *Ramayana* that the non-Aryan races were quite conversant with the Vedas. Rama and Lakshmana, wandering in search of Sita, are met by Hanuman who addresses them in Sanskrit. Rama admires the correctness of his language and says :

'Nähṛigveda-vinîtasya nayajurvedadhäriṇaḥ
näśämaveda-vidushah śäḥakyam evam prabhäshitum
(*Ramayana*, Kish.)*

'For one not made wise by the study of the *Rig Veda*, for one who has not mastered the *Yajur Veda*. for one not versed in the *Sama Veda*, it is impossible to speak like this.'

When Hanuman enters Lanka alone in search of Sita, he hears at night 'the mantras of the reciters in the homes of Rakshasas' and he 'sees demons (Yätudhänan) engaged in the study of the Holy Scriptures (svädhyäyanirata), i.e. *Vedas*. (*Rama*, Sund.). At any rate Valmiki understood the Vedas to be meant for all the races of mankind.

1. No. 272; 2. Nos. 274, 300;

fellowship with men to the fellowship with all living beings, insisting on the reciprocity of the feeling :

O Strong One ! make me strong.
May all the living beings look on me with the eye of a friend.
May I look on all living beings with the eye of a friend.
May we (all) look on (one another) with the eye of a friend (mitra). (Y. VS. 32, 8.)[1]

In his final realisation, the sage, who is described as Vena, the Loving One,* sees all reality united in the Supreme Being.

The loving sage beholds that mysterious Existence (Sat)
Wherein the universe comes to have one home.
(Y. VS. 32, 8.)[2]

India has followed the Vedic religion for at least three thousand and five hundred years. Qualitatively very great success has been achieved throughout the ages, including the one in which we are living. Men remarkable for their spiritual power, wisdom, and universality of outlook have been thrown up from different parts of the country. Quantitatively, too, the results are not negligible ; the masses of Hindus even today show certain essential traits of behaviour which are in conformity with some of these principles and they often present a contrast to similar classes of people at home and abroad.

The order of the six principles, considered above, has remained qualitatively much as the Veda put them. The one that created dissent earliest of all was the last—ritual (karmakanda). The Vedic text, Sabda Brahman (which is last but one), is still being learnt orally by scores of people in different parts of India. And it is to the eternal credit of Western savants that they published authoritative texts of the Vedas. Valmiki compares Hanuman's quest of Sita to the search for a lost

* Cf. *Rg.* Venanti venàh (X. 64.—2) ; The lovers (i.e. loving worshippers) yearn with love.

1. See No. 275. 2. No. 85.

Veda (Nashaṭaṁ Veda-śrutiṁ iva): these devoted scholars have performed the task of cultural volunteers in the present times. Consecration and self-dedication (Dîkshä and Tapaḥ), the third and fourth principles, are found to have remarkable parallels in the whole-hearted pursuit of knowledge among Western scholars and scientists. The physical and cultural value of the sublimation of the reproductive energy has been newly recognised by modern analytical psychology. Ṛita (Order) in the wide (bṛihat) Vedic sense is still to be realised by the world, torn asunder by manifold forces of disorder; and the harmony of the introverted Yogic path has to find its parallel in the concrete, external relations of men, communities and nations. Finally, the first principle is ever first; Satya as integrity, for every moment of life; and Satya as Sat or Reality for those exalted moments when man 'feels greater than he knows' or those exalted men who live 'on the peak of existence' (Kūtastha).[1] There have been leaders of thought in different ages who have asserted that religion is synonymous with truth—that God is Truth.[2]

India, however, has lost much of the spiritual energy and the joy of the soul, characteristic of the Vedic outlook.

Nowadays we come across apologists for the aboriginal culture superseded by the Vedic. It is difficult to decide if much of Dravidian culture is really non-Vedic. But the cultures of aboriginal tribes like Bhils, Kols, Santals, Kukis, Todas and Oraos are evidently non-Vedic. It is interesting to find how these tribes have lived their simple picturesque lives in the jungles without a change for the last three or four millenniums, while in their immediate neighbourhood the grand drama of the main body of the Indian people was being enacted with its rise and fall, climax and catastrophe, from age to age. Simplicity and picturesqueness are good enough

1. *B.G.* VI. 8; 2. See No. 223;

in their own way—and that is why these aboriginal people need not be disturbed and should be given protection against over-zealous evangelists—but the intellectual adventure and the spiritual quest of the Vedic sages, their attempt to break the barriers of tribe and group and unite men through ideals of harmony and order, of justice and universal fellowship, which won for them the title, "bhūtakritaḥ," world-fashioners (*Ath.* VI. 133. 4)[1]—these will ever lure the spirit of the awakened man, and endless efforts will be made to achieve the uplift and progress of the race.

It is the essence of the Vedic outlook to be progressive. 'Go forward, fear not, fight,' says the Vedic spirit of Kshatra (*R.* I. 80. 3)[2] : Prehi abhīhi dhṛishṇuhi. 'He goes forward, instructed by one who knows,' says the spirit of Brahman : sa praiti kshetravidānuśishtaḥ (*R.* X. 32. 7)[3] To return, then, to the Vedas is to return to the dynamic view of life characteristic of the Vedic age—the Age of Truth (Satya Yuga).

> One who lies down is Kali,
> one who awakes is Dvāpara.
> One who stands up becomes Tretā,
> and one who moves on realises the Satya Yuga.
> Therefore move on !
>
> (*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.*)

'Indra (the Supreme Vedic Deity),' says the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa,* 'is the friend of those who move on.'

The Vedas, however, do not contemplate movement without a purpose, a mere form of life without a content. They conceive movement as the progress on the path of Truth and Eternal Order, consecration and self-dedication to a noble ideal, of prayer and wisdom, and of ritual and sacrifice. Man has to grow to the fullest

1. No. 50. 2. No. 255 ; 3. No. 52.

stature of his being so that he may live in a broad, free world in the joy of the spirit. The *Atharva Veda* which lays down the six principles of Dharma contemplates such a world too :

> Truth, Order that is great and stern,
> consecration, austerity,
> prayer and ritual—these uphold the Earth.
> May that Earth, Mistress of the past
> and the future, make a wide world for us.
>
> (*Ath.* XII. 1. 1.)[1]

1. No. 222.

भक्ति-योग

THE PATH OF DEVOTION

CHAPTER I

भक्ति-योग

THE PATH OF DEVOTION

The simplest attitude in religion is that of love and devotion (भक्तियोग). Here the Divinity is contemplated as the Lord and in most affectionate terms, as Father, Mother, Brother, Friend, Guest and so on. The worshipper seeks Divine bliss (स्वस्ति). He prays for Divine help (ऊति), benediction (शम्), protection (शर्मन्), succour (अवस्), mercy (मृळा), benevolence (सुमति), love (वेन), etc. God is the Saviour (त्राता), the Merciful One (मर्डिता), Protector (अविता), and so on. He is the Most Beloved One (जुष्ट, प्रेष्ठ) and He as well as the worshipper is described as the Loving One (वेन). According to this ideology the Divinity is Common (समान) and Universal (साधारण). The spirit of love arouses the finest of Vedic poetry, and prayer often becomes song.

(1)

The Supreme Being

हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तताग्रे
भूतस्य जातः पतिरेक आसीत् ।
स दाधार पृथिवीं द्याम् उतेमां
कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥

ऋग्वेद, मंडल १०।१२१।१
यजुर्वेद (वा. सं.) १३।४, २३।१, २५।१०
अथर्ववेद, ४।२।७

Who is the Deity we shall adore with our oblation ?
The Divine Being who existed in the beginning,
Who was manifest as the One Lord of creation,
And who upheld this earth and this sky.
(*R.* X. 121.1; also *Y.* & *Ath.*)

[The Deity—Devata—is Kah, "Who?"] The term used here for the Divine Being is 'Hiranyagarbha.'

God is Creator and Ultimate Being. He is the Lord of all existence—the Supporter of the universe.

It is typical of Vedic worship that the worshipper seeks the knowledge of the Object to be worshipped. His devotion is not blind, but is based on enlightenment.

(2)

The Source of Power

य आत्मदा बलदा यस्य विश्व
उपासते प्रशिषं यस्य देवाः ।
यस्य छायामृतं यस्य मृत्युः
कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥

ऋ. १०।१२१।२ य. (वा) २३।१, २५।१३ अ. ४।२।१, १३।३।२४.

Who is the Deity we shall adore with our oblation ?
He who bestows soul-force and vigour,
Whose law the whole world obeys, the cosmic powers obey,
Whose shadow is immortality and death.
(*R.* X. 121.2; *Y.* *A.*).

[The Deity is Kah : Who?]

God is the Source of all strength, spiritual as well as physical. In Him man has his ultimate refuge.

(3)

The Rallying Point of All

समेत विश्वा ओजसा पतिं दिवो
य एक इद् भूर् अतिथिर्जनानाम् ।
स पूर्व्यो नूतनम् आजिगीषन्
तं वर्तनीर् अनु वावृत एक इत् ॥ साम. १।४।३१३ (३७२)

Come together, ye all, with power of spirit, to the Lord of heaven,
Who is only One, the Guest of the people ;
He, the Ancient, desires to come to the new ;
To Him all path-ways turn ; verily He is One.
(*Sama*, 372)

[The Deity is Indra.]

The noble verse is reproduced from the *Sama Veda* in the *Atharva Veda* VII. 21. 1 [where the Deity is Brahman]. *Atharva Veda* substitutes 'vacas', world of prayer, for 'varcas', 'power of spirit.'

Note the word समेत "come together", "assemble." The Vedic worship was of a collective type. विश्वा —all— implies that all are invited to worship, without exception and without distinction. ओजस् is spiritual power or soul-force, which was specially cultivated by the Vedic religion. एक —One—implies unity of the Godhead. अतिथि —Guest—is a graceful expression : one who is most welcome. जन —means the people. God is the God of all. Compare—

इन्द्र साधारणस्त्वम् ऋ. ८।६५।७

God ! Thou art common to all. (See No. 272)

Also—

समानम् इन्द्रम् अवसे हवामहे । ऋ. ८।९,९।८

We invoke Indra who is common to all.

पूर्व्य—the Ancient, the First Cause. "To Him all path-ways turn"—i.e. He is the Supreme Goal of all.

(4)

Song of Praise

अर्चत प्रार्चत प्रियमेधासो अर्चत ।
अर्चन्तु पुत्रका उत पुरं न धृष्ण्वर्चत ॥ ऋ. ८।६९।८, सा. ३५२

अव स्वराति गर्गरो गोधा परि सनिष्वणत् ।
पिङ्गा परि चनिष्कदद् इन्द्राय ब्रह्मोद्यतम् ॥

ऋ. ८।६९।९, अ. २०।९२।५-६

Sing, sing forth your songs, O Priyamedhas, sing!
Let children also sing!
Sing of Him (who is a Refuge) like the strong castle.
Now loudly let the *gargara* (violin) sound,
Let the *godhä* (lute) send its resounding voice,
Let the string send its tunes around;
To God is our hymn upraised.
(*R*. VIII 69-8-9; also *A*. and *S*. for the 1st verse).

[Here the Deity is Indra.]

Down through the ages the sky of India has rung with songs of love and devotion.

This is the typical mode of worship according to the path of devotion (भक्ति). Here prayer is the musical outburst from the love-filled heart of man. This simple and direct prayer comes from the child as well as from the adult.

(5)

The Greatest Friend

त्राता नो बोधि दद्दशान आपिर्
अभिख्याता मर्डिता सोम्यानाम् ।
सखा पिता पितृतमः पितॄणां
कर्तेमु लोकम् उशते वयोधाः ॥ ऋ. ४।१७।१७

Be Thou our Saviour; show Thyself our Own,
Looking after and showing mercy to the worshippers.
Friend, Father, Fatherliest of fathers,
Giving to the loving worshipper free space and life.
(*R*. IV 17-17.)

The terms त्राता, Saviour, मर्डिता, the Merciful One, and सखा, Friend, typically signify the spirit of the religion of devotion (भक्तियोग). Similarly उशते, 'to the loving

or longing one', shows love as the mode of approach to the Divine. 'Fatherliest of fathers' indicates the supreme nature of the Divinity. The gifts asked for are also typical of the Vedas :—लोकम् 'a wide world', in which we can move freely, and वयः, 'life, vital force.'

[The Deity is Indra.]

(6)

The One with many Names

यो नः पिता जनिता यो विधाता
धामानि वेद भुवनानि विश्वा ।
यो देवानां नामधा एक एव
तं संप्रश्नं भुवना यन्त्यन्या ॥ ऋ. १०।८२।३
य. १७।२७; अ. २।१।३

Our Father, our Creator, our Disposer,
Who knows all positions, all things existing;
Who is the only One, bearing names of different Deities;
Him other beings seek with questionings.
(*R.* X. 82-3 ; also *Y* & *A.*)

God is One ; Gods are differently named Ideas of the One Being.

[The Diety is Vishvakarman (विश्वकर्मन्) the Creator (lit. Architect) of the Universe.]

The same verse occurs in *Atharva-veda* (II. 1. 3).

स नः पिता जनिता स उत बन्धुः

He is our Father, our Progenitor, our Friend.

In *Yajur-veda* a somewhat different version of the same stanza occurs.

स नो बन्धुर् जनिता स विधाता
धामानि वेद भुवनानि विश्वा । य. (वा.) ३२।१०

He is our Friend, Our Father, Our Creator :
Who knows all positions, all existing things.

Also compare *Samaveda* (1841) :

उत वात पितासि न उत भ्रातोत नः सखा ।

O God ! Thou art our Father, our Brother, our Friend.
(Also *Rig Veda*, X. 186. 2.)

(7)

Divine Benevolence

अभ्यूर्णोति यन्नग्नं भिषक्ति विश्वं यत् तुरम् ।
प्रेमन्धः ख्यन्निः श्रोणो भूत् ॥ ऋ. ८।७९।२

He clothes all that is naked,
He doctors all that is sick ;
Through Him the blind man sees, the cripple goes about.
(*R.* VIII 79-2.)

[The Deity is Soma.]

Here Divine benevolence is described. Man is most God-like when he takes care of the naked, the sick, the blind and the cripple.

(8)

God is Pure

एतो न्विन्द्रं स्तवाम शुद्धं शुद्धेन साम्ना ।
शुद्धैर् उक्थैर् वावृध्वांसं शुद्ध आशीर्वान् ममत्तु ॥
ऋ. ८।९५।७, अ. २०।६५।१

Come now and let us pray to the Deity, who is pure, with pure Sama hymn,—
Him who is glorified by pure praise-songs ;
May the pure, blissful One be pleased.
(*R.* VII. 95-7 ; A.)

Purity is Godliness. Man should be pure in body and mind in offering his prayers to God.

(9)

Divine Holiness

The following verse describes divine holiness :

अग्निः शुचिव्रततमः शुचिर्विप्रः शुचिः कविः ।
शुची रोचत आहुतः ॥ ऋ. ८।४४।२१

The Deity is Supreme among those who live the holy life.
He is the holy Sage, the holy Poet.
He, who is being called by us in prayer, is resplendent in holiness. (*R.* VIII 44-21.)

[The Deity is Agni]

The Vedas, in addition to recognising truth, goodness and beauty as the values of life, also recognise the spiritual value—holiness.

(10)

The Divinity in Man

प्र भ्रातत्वं सुदानवोऽध द्विता समान्या ।
मातुर्गर्भे भरामहे ॥ ऋ. ८।८३।८

O Bounteous Ones, we have established now our perpetual brotherhood,
With harmony, in the mother's womb.
(*R.* VIII 83-8.)

To be born man is to partake of the divine nature. Man establishes his kinship with the Divine in the mother's womb.

[The verse is addressed to "All Gods," (विश्वे देवाः)]

This sense of the essential divinity of man is a special feature of the Vedic religion and spiritual idealism. The idea also occurs in the *Atharva Veda* Book XI, where, in the description of the creation of the Body of Man in the beginning, it is said :

सर्वं संसिच्य मर्त्यं देवाः पुरुषमाविशन् (अ. ११।८।१३)

When they had fused the mortal man complete,
the Gods entered into him.

Compare *Rigveda* :

शृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्रा

आ ये धामानि दिव्यानि तस्थुः । ऋ. १०।१३।१

May all sons of immortality listen,—all the possessors of celestial natures.—

which has been reproduced in the Upanishad.

(*Svet.* II. 5).

It is from this point of view that religion has been described as "the manifestation of the divinity that is already in man" (Swami Vivekananda). Man approaches God through what is divine in himself.

(11)

Approaching the Divine through the Joy of Soul

अग्निं मन्द्रं पुरुप्रियं

शीरं पावकशोचिषम् ।

हृद्भिर् मन्द्रेभिर् ईमहे ॥ ऋ. ८।४३।३१

We worship with joyous hearts the joyous Deity, dear to all, effulgent, holy, purifying.

(*R.* VIII 43-31.)

[The Deity is Agni]

There is a sacredness in our highest joy, corresponding to the infinite joy in the Divine. Hence a medium of approach to the Divine is the joy of the soul.

The conception of the joy of a stainless soul seeking the pure joy of the Divine is typically Vedic. According to it man is not borne down under the burden of sin. His is not a worship in penitence. It is the opening of the flood-gates of a joyous soul before the radiant glory of the Source of all joy.

Vedic poetry is typical of this joyous out-pouring of a lofty spirit. The Vedic hymns have been rightly compared in the Veda itself to streams gushing out of mountains :

गिरिभ्रजो नोर्मयो मदन्तो ।

बृहस्पतिमभ्य १ र्का अनावन् ॥ ऋ. १०।६८।१

Like joyous streams bursting from the mountain,
To Brihaspati our hymns have sounded.

(12)

God the Saviour

त्रातारम् इन्द्रम् अवितारम् इन्द्रं हवेहवे सुहवं शूरम् इन्द्रम् ।
ह्वयामि शक्रं पुरुहूतम् इन्द्रं स्वस्ति नो मघवा धात्विन्द्रः ॥

ऋ. ६।४७।११, साम. ३३३
अ. ७।८६।१, य. (वा) २०।५०

God the Rescuer, God the Saviour, mighty God, happily invoked at each invocation,
God, powerful, invoked of many, I invoke,
May God, the bounteous, confer on us blessing.
(*R.* VI. 47-11 ; also the three other Vedas).

[The Deity is Indra]

The hymn occurs in all the four Vedas, being put into the musical form in the *Sama Veda.* The recurring rhythm of "Indram" and the smoothly flowing sounds make it most suitable for communal singing (*kîrtana*).

The idea is typical of the attitude of devotion (*bhakti,* as it came to be called later) through which man seeks Divine assistance and grace to help him out of his sorrows and imperfection. According to the *bhakti* ideal, the sincere devotion of the heart is enough for worship ; the details of ritual are not needed. The same conception is found here.

This is a feature of mass religion. This hymn, in respect of its ideas as well as of metrical form, is a typical mass prayer.

It may be noted that according to the *Vedas,* God Himself is the Saviour and Helper.

(13)

God, the Refuge of Man

प्र ते यक्षि प्र त इयर्मि मन्म
भुवो यथा वन्द्यो नो हवेषु ।

धन्वन्निव प्रपा असि त्वमग्न

इयक्षवे पूरवे प्रत्न राजन् ॥ ऋ. १०।४।१

To Thee I will bring oblation, to Thee I will send my prayer—
To Thee who hast been adorable in our invocations;
A fountain in the desert art Thou, O Deity!
To the worshipful man, O ancient King!

(*R.* X. 4-1)

[The Deity is Agni]

Here, again, we find an attitude of worship in keeping with what has come to be known latterly as the spirit of *bhakti.* As in the desert the thirsty man is saved by a fountain of water found in an oasis, so in the world man is saved by Divine grace.

(14)

The Divine Mother

The same idea of the Divinity as the Refuge of man is expressed in the following hymn in which the Deity is addressed in the feminine gender, as Mother :

इमा जुह्वाना युष्मदा नमोभिः

प्रति स्तोमं सरस्वति जुषस्व ।

तव शर्मन् प्रियतमे दधाना

उप स्थेयाम शरणं न वृक्षम् ॥

ऋ. ७।९५।५

These offerings have been made by you with adoration, say this Saraswati and be pleased with each of our prayers;
And placing us under thy protection, thou most beloved! may we approach thee as a tree for shelter.

(*R. VII.* 95-5.)

As birds seek the shelter of the tree so we, men, seek the shelter of the Divine Mother, Saraswati.

The worship of the Divinity as Mother is a special feature of the religion of love. The word *"priyatama"*, "most beloved", which carries so much sweetness in the text quoted above, is still used in the Indian languages and has the same sweet association about it.

The word शर्मन् 'Divine protection, grace,' occurs frequently in the *Vedas*. The *Sama Veda* has a beautiful line about it :

शर्म वर्म ममान्तरम् (सा. १८७२)

Divine grace is the coat-of-mail within me.

(The warrior is clad in the coat-of-mail which protects the vital parts of his body ; but the grace of God is the coat-of-mail within him.)

(15)

Prayer to God in Pain

Through the joy of his soul man approaches God, the joyful. In moments of pain and distress he approaches God, the merciful. The following prayer is of this type :

मूषो न शिश्ना व्यदन्ति माध्यः
स्तोतारं ते शतक्रतो ।
सकृत् सु नो मघवन्निन्द्र
मृळयाऽधा पितेव नो भव ॥

ऋ. १०।३३।३

As rats eat weavers' threads, cares are eating inside me, thy singer, O God Almighty !
Show Thy mercy on us once, O Gracious Lord ! Be like a Father to us now. (*R.* X. 33-3.)

[The Deity is Indra]

This prayer for मृळा, Divine mercy or grace, like that for Divine protection (शर्मन्) is typical of the attitude of *bhakti*, and is a feature of mass religion.

(16)

God the Support of the Humble

वि चक्रमे पृथिवीम् एष एतां
क्षेत्राय विष्णुर् मनुषे दशस्यन् ।
ध्रुवासो अस्य कीरयो जनास
उरुक्षितिं सुजनिमा चकार ॥ ऋ. ७।१००।४

Vishnu overstrode this earth, ready to give it for a home to man. The humble people find themselves secure under His protection. This noble One has made the earth spacious for them.

(*R.* VII. 100-4.)

[The Deity is Vishnu]

The worship of Vishnu took a sectarian form in the Vaishnavite cult. But the ideology of Vaishnavism is found in the Vedas. According to this, the chief thing in religion is Divine grace which is most needed by the humble and distressed. The devotee constantly realises that all he has and all that he enjoys are from God who in His infinite kindness has endowed him with these.

This is also the ideology of mass religion.

(17)

God the Most Loving

त्वं हि नः पिता वसो
त्वं माता शतक्रतो बभूविथ ।
अधा ते सुम्नम् ईमहे ॥ ऋ. ८।९८।११, सा. ११७०,
अ. २०।१०८।२

Bounteous One! Thou art our Father ;
and our Mother, O Lord, Thou hast been.
Now we pray for Thy bliss.

(*R.* VIII. 98-11 also *S.* and *A.*)

[The Deity is Indra]

The great love of God is expressed through the analogy of the love of the father and the mother.

[Here the Divinity is addressed as both Father and Mother. In later times when the abstract conception of the Divinity was particularised, the two ideas were expressed separately as God the Father and His consort, Goddess the Mother : e.g. as Shiva and Parvati. Kālidāsa prays to the 'Parents'—"पितरौ वन्दे".]

(18)
God the Next of Kin

But in the Vedas not only are the conceptions of the Father and the Mother combined, but also those of all affectionate relationships, as in the following :

अग्निं मन्ये पितरम् अग्निम् आपिम्
अग्निं भ्रातरं सदमित् सखायम् ।
अग्नेर् अनीकं बृहतः सपर्यं
दिवि शुक्रं यजतं सूर्यस्य ॥ ऋ. १०।७।३

The Deity I deem my Father, my Kinsman, my Brother,
deem Him my Friend for ever.
I honour as the face of the great Deity,
the holy light of the sun in the sky. (*R.* X. 7-3.)

Here the Deity (who is Agni) is spoken of in terms of affectionate family and social relationships. And the lovely light of the sun is taken as a reflection of His radiance.

In the expression of the relation between the Divine and the human, the sense of the affection of man and that of the holiness of nature are brought together. This is the way of "Paganism" of which humanism and naturalism are essential elements.

(19)
The Divinity as Father to the Child

तिष्ठा सु कं मघवन् मा परा गाः
सोमस्य नु त्वा सुषुतस्य यक्षि ।
पितुर् न पुत्रः सिचम् आ रभे त
इन्द्र स्वादिष्ठया गिरा शचीवः ॥ ऋ. ३।५३।२

Stay still, O Bountiful One! don't go away;
I will offer thee a libation of well-pressed Soma juice.
O mighty God, with my sweetest song,
I grasp Thy garments hem as a child grasps his father's.
(*R.* III. 5-3-2.)

[The Deity is Indra]

Here the analogy of the child's grasping the hem of the father's garment brings out the tender relation of love between the Deity and the worshipper.

(20)

The Divinity as Mother to Infants

यस्ते स्तनः शशयो यो मयोभूर्
येन विश्वा पुष्यसि वार्याणि ।
यो रत्नधा वसुविद् यः सुदत्रः
सरस्वति तम् इह धातवे कः ॥ ऋ. १।१६४।४९,
अ. ७।१०।१, शु य. (वा) ३८।५

Saraswati ! that exhaustless breast of Thine which is the source of well-being,
With which Thou nourishest all good things
Which contains treasure, possesses wealth, confers good gifts,
That lay Thou bare here for our nourishment.
(*R. I.* 164-49 also *Y* and *A.*)

Here the worshipper is like the child feeding at the breast of the Divine Mother (Saraswati).

The following is a similar prayer to Ushas :

तस्यास्ते रत्नभाज ईमहे वयं
स्याम मातुर् न सूनवः ॥ ऋ. ७।८१।४

We yearn to be Thine own, Dealer of jewels !
May we be to Thee like sons to the Mother.
(*R.* VII. 81-4.)[1]

(21)

The Divinity as Child

The idea of God being the most beloved has been expressed in various ways. He has been compared to the

1. See No. 118.

child loved by and loving the mother, as in the following stanza :

एकः सुपर्णः स समुद्रम् आ विवेश
स इदं विश्वं भुवनं वि चष्टे ।
तं पाकेन मनसापश्यम् अन्तितस्
तं माता रेळ्हि स उ रेळ्हि मातरम् ॥ ऋ. १०।११४।४

The One beautiful-winged (Bird),
Has entered the sea (vastness of space) ;
He looks round this whole universe ;
Him with a simple heart I have seen from near ;
His Mother kisses Him and He kisses His Mother.
(*R*. X. 114-4.).

"सुपर्ण" the "beautiful-winged" (Bird), is a symbol for the Deity in the mystical conception of the Divinity. Note the following line in the same hymn :

सुपर्णं विप्राः कवयो वचोभिर्
एकं सन्तं बहुधा कल्पयन्ति । ऋ. १०।११४।५

The beautiful-winged (Bird) [*i.e.*, the Deity] who is One the wise poets imagine with their words in many ways.

The poet says he observes the Divine Being from near and sees the vision of the child kissed by and kissing the mother.

Here, whatever the rational significance of the line, the spiritual and poetic significance is simple and clear: that the vision of the Divinity is the vision of the exchange of love between child and mother.

For पाक, simple, compare :

प्र पाकं शास्ति । ऋ. ११३११४

He instructs the simple.

(22)

Hymns Caress the Child

The idea is also found in *R*. X. 123. 1—where the Deity is spoken of as "Vena", "the loving (and beloved) One":

अयं वेनश्चोदयत् पृश्निगर्भा
ज्योतिर्जरायू रजसो विमाने ।
इमम् अपां संगमे सूर्यस्य
शिशुं न विप्रा मतिभी रिहन्ति ॥ ऋ.१०।१२३।१,
य. (वा) ७।१६

This is the Loving One, driving the issues of the many-coloured ;
The Spring of light, in the chariot of splendour ;
Him at the meeting of the waters and the sun
The sages with their hymns caress as a child.
(*R.* X. 123-1, also Y).

Here also out of the obscurity of mystic symbolism there emerges a clear poetic idea that the songs of the sages caress the Divinity as a child.

(23)
Hymns Kiss the Child

There is an equally mystical stanza—*R.V.* IX. 85. 11—in which the loving sages, called "Venas" (loving ones), seek the mysterious Being :

नाके सुपर्णम् उपपप्तिवांसं
गिरो वेनानाम् अकृपन्त पूर्वीः ।
शिशुं रिहन्ति मतयः पनिप्नतं
हिरण्ययं शकुनं क्षामणि स्थाम् ॥ ऋ. ९।८५।११

The many voices of the loving ones sought the Bird who had flown to the heavens :
The hymns kiss the Child, worthy of laudation,—the golden-hued Bird that sits on the earth.
(*R.* IX. 85-11.)

[The Deity is Soma Pavamana]

In spite of the mystical symbolism, the idea of worship through tender love, corresponding to the tender caressing of a child, is clear enough here.

The third line is repeated in IX. 86. 31.

[In later forms of Indian religion the conception of the Divinity as a child reappears in the "religion of affection"—"vatsala rasa"—which formed part of the

Bhakti cult. In the Purana, Child Krishna is made to symbolise the idea of the Divinity loved as the child.]

(24)

Prayer as Love-Song

परि त्वा गिर्वणो गिर

इमा भवन्तु विश्वतः ।

वृद्धायुम् अनु वृद्धयो

जुष्टा भवन्तु जुष्टयः । ऋ. १।१०।१२. य. वा. ५।२९

Lover of song! may these songs of mine
encompass Thee on all sides,
Exalting the Most Exalted One,
and loving, may they be loved.

(*R.* I. 10. 12; Y.)

[The Deity is Indra]

The Vedic sages discovered the secret that the song was the medium of expression for the intensest feelings. So their love of God expressed itself in songs. The prayer, 'May they be loved' is typical of the poet who longs to see his songs lovingly accepted.

This tradition of prayer through song has persisted through the ages in India.

(25)

Love-Yearning for the Divine

The eagerness and yearning of love are expressed in the following hymn :

क्रतूयन्ति क्रतवो हृत्सु धीतयो

वेनन्ति वेनाः पतयन्त्या दिशः ।

न मर्डिता विद्यते अन्य एभ्यो

देवेषु मे अधि कामा अयंसत ॥ ऋ. १०।६४।२

In my heart thoughts and feelings agitate :
Love-yearnings proceed ; they fly to all the regions.
No comforter exists other than These ;
In the Gods are my highest longings fixed.

(*R.* X. 64-2.)

[The Deity is Viśve Devah, All Gods]

[From the spiritual point of view there is no difference in the Vedas between singular, dual or plural numbers, nor between the masculine, feminine and neuter genders, in which the names of the Divinity may appear.]

Compare :

त्वाम् उशिजः प्रथमा अगृभ्णत
तुभ्येमा विश्वा भुवनानि येमिरे ॥ ऋ. ९।८६।३०

The first loving worshippers held Thee fast,
To Thee all living creatures turned.
(R. V. IX. 86·30.)

(26)

Unity of the World in the Divine

One who realises the Divine as the Loving One finds the whole world united in Him. In the following verse of the *Yajur Veda* the sage, significantly named "Vena," (the loving one), sees such a vision :

वेनस् तत् पश्यन् निहितं गुहा सद्
यत्र विश्वं भवत्येकनीडम् ।
तस्मिन्निदं सं च वि चैति सर्वं
स ऽ ओतः प्रोतश्च विभूः प्रजासु ॥ यजु. ३२।८

The loving sage beholds that Mysterious Existence wherein the universe comes to have one home :
Therein unites and therefrom issues the whole :
The Lord is warp and woof in created beings.
(Y. VS. 32.8.)

[Here we find all the typical ideas of mysticism. First, the Divinity is a subject of personal experience (Vena *sees* That). Secondly, the ultimate conception of Divinity is that of a mystery (symbolically expressed as गुहानिहितं). Thirdly, the abstract conception of the Divine as an Essence, an Existence, is symbolised by the pronoun in neuter singular तत् qualifying the neuter abstract noun, सद्. The idea becomes concrete with the masculine विभूः in the next line. Fourthly, in the

Divine the whole universe is united in love, as birds in a nest (नीड, primary sense) or men in a home (नीड, secondary sense)].

The idea of Divine presence as the underlying power of unity is beautifully expressed by the metaphor of warp and woof.

(The first two lines occur in *A*. II. 1. 1., slightly changed. The whole with slight changes occurs in *Mah. Up.* I. 14).

(27)

God the Lover

दोहेन गाम् उप शिक्षा सखायं
प्र बोधय जरितर् जारम् इन्द्रम् ।
कोशं न पूर्णं वसुना न्यृष्टम्
आ च्यावय मघदेयाय शूरम् ॥ ऋ. १०।४२।२,
अ. २०।८९।२

Draw thy Friend to Thee like a cow to milking :
O Singer, wake up God the Lover !
Move the Hero for the gift of bounty
Like the vessel filled brimful with treasure.
(*R*. X. 42-2; *Ath.*)

[The Deity is Indra]

Here the word Lover (जार) has been used in a general sense. It has also been used in a particular sense to indicate the youthful gallant who loves a maiden :

जारः कनीन इव चक्षदानः । ऋ. १।११७।१८

Bounteous as the lover of the maiden. (*R*. I. 117-18.)

प्रियां न जारो अभिगीत इन्दुः

Indu, be sung as a lover to the beloved.
(*R*. IX. 96-23).

[The word जार has got a degraded meaning in certain modern Indian languages. In the Vedas it means just 'a lover'].

The word has been used not only in the simile but also metaphorically :

यमो ह जातो यमो जनित्वं

जारः कनीनां पतिर्जनीनाम् । ऋ. १।६६।८

He is the Master of present and of future life :
The Lover of maidens, the Husband of wives.

(28)

Like the Youth among Maidens

In the following verse the Divinity described as Soma is said to meet Waters (आपः) as a young man meets youthful maidens :

याभिः सोमो मोदते हर्षते च

कल्याणीभिर् युवतिभिर् न मर्यः ।

ता अध्वर्यो अपो अच्छा परेहि

यद् आसिञ्चा ओषधीभिः पुनीतात् ॥ ऋ. १०।३०।५

The Waters in whom the Deity delights and rejoices,
As a young man with graceful maidens,
Go to them, O worshipper,
And purify with herbs what thou hast sprinkled.
(*R.* X. 30-5.)

[The Deity is Soma]

The adjective (कल्याणी) good, blissful, gracious, applied to maidens, indicates the graceful nature of the relation. Cf. यथेमां वाचम् कल्याणीम् आवदानि.

May I speak these gracious words. (Y. 26·2).

[In later religious literature we are told of the loving Divine Youth, Krishna of Vrindavan, and maidens in love with him. The germ of such a conception, as seen above, is found in the Veda].

The following analogy is that of the acceptance of a maiden by a youth :

स्तोमं जुषेथां युवशेव कन्यनां

विश्वेह देवौ सवनाय गच्छतम् ॥ ऋ. ८।३५।५

Accept our song of praise as a youth accepts a maid :
O ye Twin Gods, receive all libations here.

[The Twin Gods are Asvins]

(29)

Like the Husband to the Wife

The metaphor of the "husband of wives" has also **been** expressed in detail, e.g. in the following :—

अच्छा म इन्द्रं मतयः स्वर्विदः

सध्रीचीर् विश्वा उशतीर् अनूषत ।

परि ष्वजन्ते जनयो यथा पतिं ।

मर्यं न शुन्ध्युं मघवानम् ऊतये ॥ ऋ. १०।४३।१.

अ. १०।१७।३

O God ! In perfect unison all yearning hymns of mine
that have known the light have sung forth thy praise :
As the wife embraces the husband, the comely bridegroom,
so they encompass the Bountiful One for grace.
(*R.* X. 43-1 ; *A.*)

[The Deity is Indra]

(30)

The Divine Magnetism

The attractions of love between the worshipper **and** the Deity have found fine comparisons in the **following** verse :

गाव इव ग्रामं युयुधिर् इवाश्वान्

वाश्रेव वत्सं सुमना दुहाना ।

पतिरिव जायाम् अभि नो न्येतु

धर्ता दिवः सविता विश्ववारः ॥ ऋ. १०।१४९।४

Like kine to the village, like warriors to their horses,
Like loving milch cows to their calves ;
Like the husband to the wife, may the Deity, the **Upholder**
of the heavens, Lord of all bliss, turn towards us.
(*R.* X. 149-4.)

[The Deity is Savita]

(31)
Like the Chaste Wife

In the following the Divinity has been compared to a chaste wife beloved of the husband :

देवो न यः पृथिवीं विश्वधाया
उपक्षेति हितमित्रो न राजा ॥
पुरः सदः शर्मसदो न वीरा
अनवद्या पतिजुष्टेव नारी ॥ ऋ. १।७३।३

He who is like the shining one (sun), the supporter of all ;
Who abides on earth like a king with good friends ;
Who is like heroes at home that sit in front,
And like the irreproachable wife beloved of her husband.
(R. I. 73-3).

[The Deity is Agni]

In the following the Divinity is compared to a wife at home who is like an ornament to all :

जायेव योनावरं विश्वस्मै । ऋ. १।६६।५

Like a wife in a household, an ornament to all.

Perhaps nowhere outside the Vedas has the glory of the Divine been interpreted by comparison with the glory of a wife.

(32)
The Most Beloved

अग्ने नक्षत्रम् अजरम्
आ सूर्यं रोहयो दिवि ।
दधज् ज्योतिर् जनेभ्यः ॥
अग्ने केतुर् विशाम् असि
प्रेष्ठः श्रेष्ठः उपस्थसत् ।
बोधा स्तोत्रे वयो दधत् ॥ ऋ. १०।१५६।४-५,
सा. १५३०-३१

O Effulgent One, Thou hast made the sun, ageless star, to mount the sky, conferring light on men.
Thou, O Effulgent One, art the people's Light ;

Best and dearest art Thou by our side ;
Think of the singer, give him life.

(*R.* X. 156-4.5; *S.*)

[Here the Deity is Agni]

The superlatives प्रेष्ठः 'most beloved' and श्रेष्ठः 'best' are very significant.

(33)
God the Friend

माकिर् न एना सख्या वि यौषुस्
तव चेन्द्र विमदस्य च ऋषेः ।
विद्मा हि ते प्रमतिं देव जामि-
वद् अस्मे ते सन्तु सख्या शिवानि ॥ ऋ. १०।२३।७

Never may this friendship be severed
Of Thee, O Deity, and of the sage Vimada.
We know, O God ! Thy brother-like love ;
With us be Thy auspicious friendship.

(*R.* X. 23.7.)

[The Deity is Indra]

The key-note of this type of worship is the contemplation of friendly love [described in later religious literature as सख्य "friendliness"] between the Deity and the worshipper.

The following prayer is in the same spirit :

भवा नः सुम्ने अन्तमः
सखा वृधे ॥ ऋ. ८।१३।३

Be Thou most near to us for bliss, a Friend to aid.

(34)
God the Guest

In the following stanza the Deity is described as "the dearest Guest".

प्रेष्ठं वो अतिथिं स्तुषे
मित्रम् इव प्रियम् ।
अग्निं रथं न वेद्यम् ॥ ऋ ८।८४।१, सा. ५, १२४४

I laud the Deity, your dearest Guest,
Beloved as a friend ;
To be approached (for help) like a chariot.
(*R.* VIII. 84-1; *S.*)

[The Deity is Agni]

Elsewhere He is spoken of as a "Bosom-Friend" and "beloved Guest."

जुष्टो दमुना अतिथिर् दुरोणे । ऋ. ५।४।५, अ. ७।७३।९

As dear House-friend, Guest, beloved in the dwelling.
(*R.* V. 4.5 ; *A.*)

(35)

The Guest of Every Home

विशोविशो वो अतिथिं
वाजयन्तः पुरुप्रियम् ।
अग्निं वो दुर्यं वचः
स्तुषे शूषस्य मन्मभिः ॥ ऋ. ८।७४।२, सा. ८७, १५६४

Him who is your Guest in every home,
the Deity, much-beloved, your familiar Friend,
may we glorify, exerting strength, in speech and with hymns of power. (*R.* VIII. 74-2; *S.*)

[The Deity is Agni]

As the Divine, the Deity is a Great One, the Receiver of oblation ; but from the human point of view He is a Guest among men to be treated with love :

विश्वेषाम् अदितिर् यज्ञियानां
विश्वेषाम् अतिथिर् मानुषाणाम् । ऋ. ४।१।२०
य. (वा). ३३।१६

He is Aditi (the Primal Being) among all receivers of oblations :
He is Atithi (a Guest) among all men.

The idea has survived in Bhakti literature.

Compare Kabir :

जीव महल में सिव पहुन राँ

In the home of man God (Shiva) is the **Guest ;**

and Tagore :

शरते आज कोन अतिथि एलो प्राणेर द्वारे ?

Who on this autumn morning is the Guest at my heart's door?

—*Gitanjali* (Bengali), 38.

One gives to the guest and does not expect to receive anything from him. Hence the worship of God as Guest is that of pure, motiveless love (bhakti).

(36)

" We are Thine "

वयं घा ते त्वे इद्विन्द्र विप्रा अपि ष्मसि ।

नहि त्वदन्यः पुरुहूत कश्चन मघवन्नस्ति मर्डिता ॥

ऋ. ८।६६।१३

Truly God ! we are Thine, we worshippers depend on Thee.
Except Thee, O much-invoked, there is none, O Mighty
One, to show us grace.

(*R.* VIII 66-13).

[The Deity is Indra]

Here love is expressed by the term "we are Thine." In the following this sentiment is followed by " Thou art ours ":

(37)

" And Thou art Ours "

त्वयेद् इन्द्र युजा वयं प्रति ब्रुवीमहि स्पृधः

त्वम् अस्माकं तव स्मसि ॥ ऋ. ८।१२।३२

Supported by Thee O God ! may we answer all who defy us.
Thou art ours and we are Thine.

(*R.* VIII. 12-32).

[The Deity is Indra]

(38)

"Had I been Thou"

Sometimes the worshipper takes up an attitude of loving impertinence as in the following :

यद् अग्ने स्याम् अहं त्वं त्वं वा घा स्या अहम् ।

स्युष्टे सत्या इहाशिषः ॥ ऋ. ८।४४।२३

If, O God ! I were Thou and Thou wert I,
Thy prayers should have their due fulfilment here.
(*R.* VIII 44.23.)

[The Deity is Agni]

Here we find a typical expression of the spirit of friendship (सख्य) in the path of devotion (भक्ति).

(39)

"I will not sell Thee"

महे चन त्वाम् अद्रिवः परा शुल्काय देयाम् ।

न सहस्राय नायुताय वज्रिवो न शताय शतामघ ॥

ऋ. ८।१।५, छा. २९१

O God ! I will not sell Thee for the highest price,
Not for a thousand, nor for ten thousand, O Mighty One,
Nor for an infinite amount, O Lord of countless wealth!
(*R.* VIII 1-5; S.)

[The Deity is Indra]

[This unwavering devotion among its followers must have saved the Vedic religion through thousands of years.]

ज्ञान-योग

THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

CHAPTER II

ज्ञान-योग

THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE

We have considered above the Path of love and devotion (called भक्ति-मार्ग). We now turn to the Path of Knowledge (ज्ञान-मार्ग) in which what is prayed for is not शर्मन् (protection), अवस् (succour), मृळा (mercy), or वेन (love), but धी (intelligence, the instrument of knowledge, both material and spiritual), मेधा (talent), क्रतु (wisdom), दक्ष (efficiency) and qualities like these. They represent the principle of light (ज्योतिः). The light of intellect is also called (वर्चस्). The man of knowledge has been called in the Vedas विप्र (wise), कवि (poet-philosopher), ऋषि (sage), and by such other names.

(40)

Prayer for Wisdom

The following is a prayer for wisdom :

इन्द्र क्रतुं न आ भर
पिता पुत्रेभ्यो यथा ।
शिक्षा णो अस्मिन् पुरुहूत यामनि
जीवा ज्योतिर् अशीमहि ॥ ऋ. ७।३२।२६, सा. २५९, १४५६,
अ. १८।३।६७, २०।७९।१

God ! give us wisdom as a father gives wisdom to his sons.
Guide us, much-invoked, in this path.
May we live and have light.

(*R.* VII. 32-26 also *S.* and *A.*)

Here the Deity (Indra) is invoked not for fatherly protection (शर्मन) but for fatherly instruction and guidance (शिक्षा).

[The analogy, "as a father gives wisdom to his sons" shows that in the Vedic household the father was the teacher of children. In *Rig Veda,* a woman sage prays :

पुत्रायेव पितरा मह्यं शिक्षतम् । ऋ. १०।३९।६ ।

Instruct me as parents instruct the son.
Here the mother also is spoken of as an instructor.]

(41)

Prayer for Mental Power

This path of knowledge is an essential part of the Vedic religion. It is the path of the sage, who never accepts faith or belief as a substitute for his personal realisation of the highest truth. His is the prayer for knowledge, for the power of the mind that leads to the realisation of the highest truth. The following prayer (known as *gayatri,* after the name of the metre) which has been repeated every day of their lives by generations of Hindus throughout the last four thousand years and more, is for this higher mental power (*dhi*) that leads to enlightenment :

भूर् भुवः स्वः तत् सवितुर् वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥ य. (वा) ३।३५, ३६।३ ; २२।९,
३०।२. ऋ. ३।६२।१०, सा. १४६२

We contemplate that adorable glory of the Deity,—that is in the earth, the sky, the heaven !
May He stimulate our mental power.
(*R.* III 62.10, also *S.* and *Y.*)

[The first three words are additions made in the White Yajurveda 36.3. Usually ओम् is added at the beginning of the prayer. ओम् indicates the All-pervading Eternal Spirit, the Ultimate Reality.]

One reason why the 'gāyitrī' is considered to be the most representative prayer in the Vedas is that it is a prayer for the highest power that man is capable of pos-

sessing— धी, higher intelligence—which brings him knowledge, material and transcendental. What the eye is to the body, धी or intelligence is to the mind.

The *Bhagavad Gita* calls the man of the highest wisdom स्थितधी, one in whom धी or higher intelligence has been securely established (II. 54).

Savita सविता as a name for the Divinity, symbolises the Power of Light. The Divinity is the Power of Light beyond darkness :

नो अन्धे चित् तमसि ज्योतिर् विदन्। ऋ. १।१००।८

He knows the light amid blinding darkness.

वेदाहम् एतं पुरुषं महान्तम्
आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात्। य. (वा) ३१।१८

I have known This Great Being radiant as the sun beyond darkness.

(42)

Prayer for Mental Perfection

भद्रं नो अपि वातय मनो दक्षम् उत क्रतुम्।
अधा ते सख्ये अन्धसो वि वो मदे
रणन् गावो न यवसे विवक्षसे ॥ ऋ. १०।२५।१, सा. ४२२

Send us a good and happy mind. Send us skill and wisdom.
Then let men with Thy friendship joy in Thy gladness,
O Joyful One! as kine in pasture. Thou waxest great.
(*R.* X. 25-1; *S.*)

Here the prayer is for mental efficiency—a good and happy mind and mental skill (दक्ष) and wisdom (क्रतु). Higher spiritual happiness comes of such intellectual perfection.

It is clear from the above that in the Vedic sense, a Brahman is *made*, not *born*. To be a Brahman is not to belong to a specially favoured caste, but to be divinely inspired with wisdom. An individual is a Brahman through his possession of this inspiration. Hence one born in the family of a person who by his individual capacity was a Brahman does not become a Brahman by his birth. If he does not possess higher knowledge, he is not a Brahman at all.]

(45)

Brahmacharya precedes Knowledge of Brahman

पूर्वो जातो ब्रह्मणो ब्रह्मचारी
घर्मं वसानस् तपसोदतिष्ठत् ।
तस्माज् जातं ब्राह्मणं ब्रह्म ज्येष्ठं
देवाश्च सर्वे अमृतेन साकम् ॥ अ. ११।५।५

The Brahmacharin (student of spiritual knowledge), born before brahman (spiritual knowledge), robed in libation, stood up through spiritual endeavour (tapas).
From him arose (i.e. he revealed) sacred wisdom, (the knowledge of) the highest Brahman and of all the Shining Ones with life that lasts for ever.

(*Ath.* XI. 5.5.)

Brahmacharya—a life of spiritual development and education—precedes the knowledge of the Divinity and the other higher things in religion. This is the standpoint of ज्ञान-योग (the path of knowledge). Here the practice of religion begins with self-perfection.

Brahmacharya is an apprenticeship in knowledge and a process of intellectual and moral development. It is a systematic course of self-discipline and education by which one qualifies for the higher spiritual life. In a more particular way it is the process of self-culture and sublimation of the sex-impulse undertaken by the student of old who aimed at Vedic learning and spiritual knowledge. The above is from the *Atharva Veda* which devotes a long section to the glorification of the Brahmacharin.

This is how the Vedic Path of knowledge leads to the conception of a "four-fold" programme of life (आश्रम-विभाग) in which the first is to be devoted to systematic self-culture (ब्रह्मचर्य).

[In later times there arose certain cults that found this self-culture and self-discipline— ब्रह्मचर्य —very exacting. They therefore opposed the Vedic Path of knowledge and prescribed paths divorced from intellectual culture and mental enlightenment.]

[Here also is the true significance of the doctrine of अधिकार, spiritual fitness to speak on higher things. In this respect the Vedic attitude is one of spiritual modesty.]

There is another point regarding this course of self-culture. In post-Vedic times, there have been differences of opinion regarding the Ultimate Reality, but none in respect of the essential need of this self-culture. For example, Buddhism and Jainism that differed in metaphysical matters accepted this ideal of self-culture. Hence their opposition to the Veda was only partial. The real opposition came from the Leftists—followers of the *Vama-marga,* and other extremist sects who dismissed Brahmacharya or self-culture as unnecessary, and set up the crude ignorant man of faith as the ideal worshipper of God.

(46)

Power of the Brahmacharin

अर्वाग् अन्यः परो अन्यो दिवस् पृष्ठात्

गुहा निधी निहितौ ब्राह्मणस्य ।

तौ रक्षति तपसा ब्रह्मचारी

तत् केवलं कृणुते ब्रह्म विद्वान् ॥ अ. ११।५।१०

One hither, the other beyond heaven's ridge :
Two treasuries of sacred lore lie hidden.
The Brahmacharin protects both these with his spiritual power (tapas) ;
Knowing Brahman he makes all this his own.
(A. XI. 5.10.)

The two types of knowledge—परा, infinite, and अपरा, finite—are subjects of search for the spiritual student. Both these are, as affecting religion, mystic (गुहानिहितौ) and require spiritual fitness for their revelation.

(47)

The Brahmacharin's Creation

The Brahmacharin, sublimating his sex-energy, creates on the spiritual plane. He vitalises the life of the community by the vigour of his spirit : so it is said—

ब्रह्मचारी सिञ्चति सानौ रेत: पृथिव्यां
तेन जीवन्ति प्रदिशश् चतस्र: ॥ अ. ११।५।१२

The Brahmacharin scatters his virile power on the ridge of the earth,
And by this live the four quarters. (A. XI. 5.12).

This implies that the man of spiritual enlightenment and culture is at the centre of higher life. From him radiate spiritual energy and inspiration.

[The association of the sublimation of sex-energy with spiritual power is understood in fuller detail in modern times than it was before, owing to the new light thrown on the subject by psycho-analysts led by Freud.]

(48)

The Spiritual Mother

The three-day ceremony of initiation (उपनयन) is taken metaphorically to indicate a new spiritual birth ;

आचार्य उपनयमानो
ब्रह्मचारिणं कृणुते गर्भम् अन्त: ।

तं रात्रीस् तिस्र उदरे बिभर्ति
तं जातं द्रष्टुम् अभि संयन्ति देवाः ॥ अ. ११।५।३

The Acharya (teacher) initiating the Brahmacharin (pupil)
Makes him (as it were) a (spiritual) child within him ;
Him for three nights he bears [like the mother the child]
in his (spiritual) womb ;
When he is born (*i.e.* is a new spiritual being) the Shining Ones convene to see him. (*A*. XI. 5.3.)

The three days symbolise the period of instruction.

[The last line has an interesting significance in religious history. What is said here about the wonderful birth of the Brahmacharin, the new spiritual Personality of Man, has also been said in later religious history about the birth of great religious men like Buddha and Jesus. Great men from distant places came to see them at their birth. The Magi came to see Jesus.

It appears, what the Veda had said hundreds of years ago became a tradition in religion and came to be attributed in later times to persons believed to be spiritually great.]

(49)

Fitness through Brahmacharya

ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा राजा राष्ट्रं वि रक्षति ।
आचार्यो ब्रह्मचर्येण ब्रह्मचारिणम् इच्छते ॥
ब्रह्मचर्येण कन्या युवानं विन्दते पतिम् ।......
ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा देवा मृत्युम् अपाघ्नत ।
इन्द्रो ह ब्रह्मचर्येण देवेभ्य स्वर् आभरत् ॥ अ. ११।५।१७-१९

Through the spiritual effort (tapas) of brahmacharya the king protects his kingdom ;
Through the spiritual effort of brahmacharya the teacher desires his pupil ;
Through the spiritual effort of brahmacharya the girl receives a youthful husband ;

By the spiritual effort of brahmacharya the Shining Ones drove away death from them;
And Indra by brahmacharya brought heavenly lustre to the Shining Ones. (A. XI. 5.17-19.)

The finest quality in man—the inner power of his character—is, according to the Veda, derived from Brahmacharya. In Vedic times women also received this higher culture.

The term 'brahmacharya' has also been taken to mean "Vedic studentship" (Whitney).

(50)

The Brahmacharin's Girdle

श्रद्धाया दुहिता तपसोऽधिजाता
स्वसा ऋषीणां भूतकृतां बभूव ।
सा नो मेखले मतिम् आ धेहि मेधाम्
अथो नो धेहि तप इन्द्रियं च ॥ अ. ६।१३३।४

She (the Brahmacharin's girdle) has become the daughter of Faith, born of spiritual ardour, and sister of world-building Rishis (sages).
As such, O Girdle! give us thinking power and talent and also give us spiritual ardour and mental vigour. (A VI. 133.4.)

The girdle was part of the uniform of the Vedic student (passing through Brahmacharya) of ancient India. It symbolised श्रद्धा, faith in the spiritual values, and the education which helped the intellectual and spiritual development of the Rishis, who built the world according to their lofty ideals.

(51)

Knowledge through Instruction

निधीयमानम् अपगूळ्हम् अप्सु
प्र मे देवानां व्रतपा उवाच ।

इन्द्रो विद्वाँ अनु हि त्वा चचक्ष
तेनाहम् अग्ने अनुशिष्ट आगाम् । ऋ. १०।३२।६

Of Thee who art lying hidden in the waters,
One who maintains the law of Gods spoke to me.
Indra, who knows, beheld and showed Thee.
By him instructed, O Agni, I come.
(*R.* X. 32.6.)

Here the sage says he has realised the knowledge through instruction received from Indra. In the following verse he explains the value of spiritual instruction. [Indra stands for the Acharya].

(The last three lines of this stanza occur also in *Rig.* III. 2.8).

(52)

The Guide in the Unknown Land

अक्षेत्रवित् क्षेत्रविदं ह्यप्राट्
स प्रैति क्षेत्रविदानुशिष्टः ।
एतद् वै भद्रम् अनुशासनस्यो-
त स्रुतिं विन्दत्यञ्जसीनाम् ॥ ऋ. १०।३२।७

One ignorant of the land asks of one who knows it ;
he travels forward instructed by the knowing guide.
This, indeed, is the blessing of instruction ;
one finds the path that leads straight onward.
(*R.* X. 32.7.)

[For क्षेत्रविद् Compare :

क्षेत्रविद्धि दिश आहा विपृच्छते ऋ. ९।७०।९

The man who knows the land tells the direction to the man who asks. (*R.* IX 70. 9).]

This means that the Acharya or teacher is a spiritual guide of the disciple. He helps the inexperienced person to find for himself what has to be known. The Acharya shows the way.

This establishes a fine principle of education, whether spiritual or intellectual. The role of the teacher is that of a guide. The pupil learns by himself.

Applied to religion, it means that every one has to find for oneself what the secret truths regarding the Ultimate Reality are. In doing so he needs guidance; but the discovery must be his own.

Compare, the *Yajur Veda* :

आ शिक्षायै प्रश्निनम्

उपशिक्षाया अभिप्रश्निनम् ॥ य. (वा) ३०।१०

For learning, the questioner ; for learning from near (the Acharya) one who questions from all sides.

(*Y. VS.* 30.10.)

[This presents a contrast to the later theory regarding the Guru who was supposed to be alone capable of spiritual discovery, and from whom the disciple was to receive it second-hand. He did not outgrow the need of the Guru's help.]

We can speak of the man following the path of knowledge that he 'goes forward' (प्रैति).

(53)

God the Knower

In the following the Deity is described as पुरुविद्वान्, all-knowing .

शिक्षा ण इन्द्र राय आ

पुरु विद्वाँ ऋचीषम ।

अवा नः पार्ये धने ॥ ऋ. ८।९२।९, सा. १६४४

Teach us, God, to win wealth,
Thou omniscient, adorable with hymns,
Help us in the decisive battle. (*R.* VIII. 92.9; S.)

Here the Deity (Indra) is spoken of as omniscient, all-knowing, and prayed to for instruction in knowledge that becomes wealth.

In the following the Deity is spoken of metaphorically as a sage:

अग्निः शचिव्रततमः
शुचिर् विप्रः शुचिः कविः ॥ ऋ. ८।४४।२१

The Deity is Supreme among those who live the holy life. He is the holy Sage, the holy Poet.

(54)

God the Poet

In the following God is spoken of as a Poet:

सुदक्षो दक्षैः क्रतुनासि सुक्रतुर्
अग्ने कविः काव्येनासि विश्ववित् ।
वसुर् वसूनां क्षयसि त्वम् एक इद्
द्यावा च यानि पृथिवी च पुष्यतः ॥ ऋ. १०।९१।३

Most skilful with Thy powers, most wise with wisdom,
O God, Thou art a Poet knowing all with thy poetic wisdom.
Master of good things Thou, the One, art the Lord
Of what the heaven and the earth produce.
(*R.* X. 91.3.)

[The Deity is Agni]

Take also the following:

कविः कवित्वा दिवि रूपम् आसजद् । ऋ. १०।१२४।७

The Poet with poetic power has fixed His beauty in the sky.

(55)

The Poet of Poets

In a specific way the Deity of spiritual knowledge has been named the "Lord (पति) of spiritual wisdom" (ब्रह्मन्)–ब्रह्मणस्पति. The following is a prayer to Him:

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे
कविं कवीनाम् उपमश्रवस्तमम् ।

ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत

आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम् ॥ ऋ. २।२३।१

We call on Thee, Lord of hosts,
The Poet of poets, the most famous of all ;
The Supreme King of spiritual knowledge, O Lord of spiritual wisdom !
Listen to us with thy graces, and sit in the place (of sacrifice). (*R.* II. 23.1.)

(56)

The Sagest of Poets

The following prayer is similar, though the name of the Divinity, Indra (इन्द्र), is different :

नि षु सीद गणपते गणेषु

त्वाम् आहुर् विप्रतमं कवीनाम् ।

न ऋते त्वत् क्रियते किं चनारे

महाम् अर्कं मघवन् चित्रम् अर्च ॥ ऋ. १०।११२।९

Lord of the people ! be seated amid our people.
Thee they call the Greatest Sage among poets,
Without Thee nothing is done, even far away.
O mighty Lord, I sing to Thee a great, wondrous hymn.

(57)

Knowledge of the Supreme is Essential

ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन्

यस्मिन् देवा अधि विश्वे निषेदुः ।

यस्तन्न वेद किम् ऋचा करिष्यति

य इत् तद् विदुस् त इमे समासते ॥ ऋ. १।१६४।३९.

अ. ९।१०।१८

The Eternal, [the Subject] of the (Vedic) hymn, existing on the supreme region :
In which all Shining Ones have their being ;
What will he do with the [Vedic] hymn who does not know That ?
But those who have known That—they are perfect.
(*R.* I. 164-39, *A.*)

For अक्षर, 'the Eternal Being,' compare महद् अक्षरम् 'the great Eternal Being,' in *R*. III. 55.1. (The term is in the neuter).

Compare also the *Bhagavad Gita* (which appears to refer to the above hymn) :

यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति । भ. गी. ८।११

That which the knowers of the Vedas speak of as Indestructible. (अक्षर).

Also note—

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमम् । भ. गी. ८।३

The Indestructible (अक्षर) is the Supreme Being.

The word is also used elsewhere in the *Gita* (*e.g.* VIII. 21, XII. 3, XV. 16).

Regarding परमे व्योमन्—the supreme plane of existence, compare the following :

यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन् । ऋ. १०।१२९।७

He who oversees all this in the supreme region.

This verse asserts the indispensability of the knowledge of the Divine in the higher spiritual life. This is the central point in ज्ञान-योग, the Path of Knowledge. This is also the central significance of the Vedas. Veda, from *vid*, to know, means knowledge. According to the Vedas, it is the knowledge of God that matters, and not the mere word of the Veda (ऋक्). The word is nothing if knowledge does not follow. Here the Veda itself says that the mere memorising of the Vedic hymn is of no spiritual value. [Here we find opposition to the Path of Formalism (कर्मकांड) in the sense that कर्मकांड (Karma-Kanda) believes in the efficacy of the Vedic word itself as mantra (मंत्र), independently of its meaning.]

The *Bhagavad Gita* strongly opposes the theory of Karma-Kānda and looks down upon people who are attached only to the word of the Veda :

वेदवादरताः पार्थ नान्यद् अस्तीति वादिनः । भ. गी. २।४२

(Those unwise people) who rejoice in the letter of the Vedas, O Partha, saying 'there is naught but this'.

The *Gita* asserts in an emphatic way :

यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः सम्प्लुतोदके ।

तावान् सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥ भ. गी. २।४६

What use there is of a tank in a place flooded over with water, so much in all the Vedas is the use for a knower of the Ultimate Reality.

This criticism is in keeping with the *Rigvedic* verse quoted above.

Note, however, the distinction made by the *Gita* between वेदवादरता :—' these who rejoice in the letter of the Veda', and वेदविदः, ' those who *know* the Veda.'

That the Ultimate Reality (अक्षर) is the subject of the Vedic hymn (ऋक्) has been recognised in all ages in India. Note the line quoted above :

यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति । भ. गी. ८।११

That which the knowers of the Vedas speak of as the Indestructible.

Note also :

वेदैश्च सर्वैर् अहम् एव वेद्यः । भ. गी. १५।१५

And that which is to be known in all the Vedas am I (*i.e.* the Supreme Being).

[Even in the middle ages, a popular interpreter of religion, Dnyaneshwar, says :

ओम् नमो जी आद्या ।

वेदप्रतिपाद्या । ज्ञानेश्वरी १।१

I bow to the Primal, Supreme Being, whose existence is established by the Veda.]

It should also be carefully noted that the concept of God as *the Eternal Existence* (अक्षर), formless and abodeless, a transcendental Power beyond all material reality, is found primarily in the Veda and in literature derived from the Veda like Āranyaka, Brāhmana, Upanishad, etc., and in later philosophical literature In certain non-Vedic religions the Supreme Being is a Person with His abode in heaven. Again, in those religions God has an anti-God or Satan (meaning 'an adversary') and hence His existence (metaphysically speaking) is limited by that of a rival.

Thus the idea of God as an eternal and absolute Existence is peculiar to the Vedic religion and philosophy.

राज-योग

THE PATH OF MYSTICISM

CHAPTER III

राज-योग

The Path of Mysticism

There is a stage in the Path of Knowledge, ज्ञान-योग, where the knowledge of the Divine is not mere philosophy, the result of a process of thought; it is experience. It is the mystical experience, प्रत्यक्षानुभूति, of the Ultimate Reality in the depth of the soul. That Reality, तत् सत्, has been described as गुहानिहित (lying in the cave, secret). The *Bhagavad Gita* describes that as the 'Sovereign Secret' and the path to it as the 'Path of the Sovereign Mystery,' राजगुह्य योग. It has been called in short, राज-योग the Path of Mysticism.

It is the path of spiritual realisation. What is realised is a Divine Presence, both transcendental and immanental. Logic and arithmetic lose their significance in this realisation. The Deity is one and many, great as well as small, beyond the categories of time, space, causality. He is the Spirit beyond matter, but pervading matter and spiritualising it; the Eternal, the Immortal, but making the passing moments of life and particles of mortal dust radiant with His glory. He is the One beyond all diversity; in Him all contradictions and conflicts meet and dissolve through a spiritual transformation. He is the rallying point of the universe; in Him all find their one home. Goodwill, love, sweetness, poetry follow the realisation; the soul rises above the trammels of life and seeks unity with all in the unity with the One. Living becomes an adventure from unreality to reality, from the human to the Divine. The mystical realisation never hardens into dogma, because the adventure is perpetual. Words with their logical connotation cannot express it; so they are charged with symbolism, meaning more than they say.

It is usual to speak of the truth that has been realised in this way as आप्त, 'obtained'. The Veda describes the following process by which truth is *obtained.*

(58)

Stages of Spiritual Realisation

व्रतेन दीक्षाम् आप्नोति
दीक्षयाप्नोति दक्षिणाम् ।
दक्षिणा श्रद्धाम् आप्नोति
श्रद्धया सत्यम् आप्यते । य. (वा). १९।३०

By self-dedication one obtains consecration; by consecration one obtains grace.
By grace one obtains reverence, and by reverence is truth obtained. (*Y.* 19.30).

Here the preparation for *obtaining* truth is not simple *brahmacharya,* the building up of character and the sublimation of the sex-energy; it is more. It is a process of steady spiritual growth till one is fitted to face Truth in its supreme splendour.

By earnest determination one dedicates oneself to higher ideals and through this self-dedication (व्रत) one enters spiritual life (दीक्षा) and achieves spiritual refinement and grace (दक्षिणा). This leads to the development of the quality of reverence (श्रद्धा), through which one is finally led to the possession of ultimate Truth (सत्य). श्रद्धा, Reverence or Faith must not be divorced from Truth. cf. श्रद्धां सत्ये प्रजापतिः (य. वा. १९।७७) "The Lord assigned Faith to Truth." (*Y.* XIX. 77)

(59)

Experience of the Supreme

Thus in mystic realisation, there is the direct experience of the Supreme; the sage of the *Yajurveda* after quoting the Purusha hymn from the *Rigveda,* speaks in terms of his own personal knowledge of the Purusha :

वेदाहम् एतं पुरुषं महान्तम्
आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।

तम् एव विदित्वाति मृत्युम् एति
नान्यः पन्था विद्यते ऽयनाय ॥ य. (वा). ३११८

I have known this Mighty Being
refulgent as the sun beyond darkness ;
By knowing Him alone one transcends death,
there is no other way to go. (Y. 31.18.)

Here the "I have known" is of extreme value, because it is not the expression of an opinion but the statement of an experience.

Considering the content of the revelation, we find that the Ultimate Reality is compared to light and the finite and material reality to darkness.

The verse has been quoted in *Svetaśvataropanishad,* III. 8.

[The *Bhagavad Gita* quotes part of this verse]

सर्वस्य धातारम् अचिन्त्यरूपम्
आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ॥ भ. गी. ८।९

(He who thinks upon) the Supporter of all, of form unimaginable, refulgent as the sun beyond darkness........]

There is a tradition to consider the Vedic Saṁhita as Karma-Kānda, *i.e.*, mere mantra and sound, and trace verses like these, which have been borrowed by Upanishads, to Upanishads and not to the Vedas. Not only is this practice scholastically erroneous, but also anomalous from the commonsense point of view. As spiritual revelation, the original alone has the true value. The Vedic sage who first says, वेदाहम्—'I have known,' is the person speaking from experience ; the Upanishadic sage who borrows the expression, speaks from श्रुति—the Veda—a fact that must have been quite clear to his contemporaries.

If religion means the overcoming of the limits of finite life and projecting the soul into the infinite, then there can be no real religion without this spiritual realisation (नान्यः पन्था विद्यते अयनाय).

(60)

The One Divine Existence

To the mystic's vision the Ultimate Being is ***One.*** And this is a special feature of Mysticism. It discovers the final and ultimate unity, beyond all plurality. The following verse gives the idea of this unity of the Divine Existence.

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणम् अग्निम् आहुर्
अथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान् ।
एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्य-
ग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानम् आहुः ॥ ऋ. १।१६४.४६,

अ. ९।१०।२८

They speak of Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni ; and there is the Divine, fine-winged Garutmat.
The One Existence the wise call by many names as Agni, Yama, Matariswan. (*R.* I. 164-46; also *A.*)

Here the Ultimate Reality is described as **एकं सद्,** One Existence.

[**सुपर्ण,** Fine-winged (Bird), is a mystical symbol in the Veda for the Ultimate Reality.]

[The *Bhagavad Gita* echoes this verse when it says about the Supreme Being :

वायुर् यमोऽग्निर् वरुणः शशाङ्कः
प्रजापतिस् त्वं प्रपितामहश्च । ब. गी. ११।३९

Thou art Väyu and Yama, Agni, Varuna and Moon ;
Lord of creation art Thou, and Grandsire.]

(61)

The One Transcendental Reality

In the following the One (in the neuter gender) implies the One Divine Existence at the beginning of things when material values of reality did not exist :

नासद् आसीन्नो सद् आसीत् तदानीं
नासीद् रजो नो व्योमा परो यत् ।

किम् आवरीवः कुह कस्य शर्म-
न्नम्भः किम् आसीद् गहनं गभीरम् ॥१॥
न मृत्युर् आसीद् अमृतं न तर्हि
न रात्र्या अह्न आसीत् प्रकेतः ।
आनीद् अवातं स्वधया तद् एकं ॥
तस्माद्धान्यन् न परः किं चनास ॥२॥ ऋ. १०।१२९

There was neither non-reality nor reality then;
There was no air nor sky which is beyond it.
What covered in and where? and whose was the shelter;
Was water there, fathomless and deep?
Death then existed not, nor life immortal,
Neither of night nor of day was there any sign;
The **ONE** breathed, airless, by self-impulse;
Apart from It was nothing whatsoever.
(*R*. X. 129-1-2).

This takes us to the loftiest heights of philosophy. It is doubtful whether the human mind ever surpassed these heights.

(62)

The One is Many

In recognising unity in diversity, mysticism does not reject the diversity. For it, the One is Many, and the Many are One. It is here that mysticism pays scant regard to arithmetic or logic.

एक एवाग्निर् बहुधा समिद्ध
एकः सूर्यो विश्वम् अनु प्रभूतः ।
एकैवोषाः सर्वम् इदं वि भा-
त्येकं वा इदं वि बभूव सर्वम् ॥ ऋ. ८।५८।२

[वालखिल्य १०।२]

One is Agni kindled in many a spot;
One is Surya shining over all;
One is Ushas illumining all this.
That which is One has become this All.
(*R*. VIII. 58.2 : Valakhilya 10.2.)

While speaking of the different visions of the Ultimate Reality, masculine (as in the cases of Agni and Surya) and feminine (as in the case of Ushas) genders have been used. But for the Ultimate Reality—the One —the neuter gender (एकम्) has been used.

(63)

That (तद्) representing All

Similarly in the following, "That" in the neuter (तद्), has been used for the Ultimate Reality of which Deities (देवता) like Agni, Vāyu and others represent different aspects and with which, therefore, the latter are identical.

तद् एवाग्निस् तद् आदित्यस्
तद् वायुस् तद् उ चन्द्रमाः ।
तद् एव शुक्र तद् ब्रह्म
ताऽआपः स प्रजापतिः ॥ य. (वा) ३२-१

Agni is but That, Aditya is That,
Vayu is That, Chandramas is That.
Light is That, Brahman is That,
Apah (Waters) are Those, Prajapati is He.
(Y. 32. 1)

Here it is made clear that the gender and number of the names of the Divinity are of no account ; all stand for the Ultimate Being. Thus, to accommodate the plural Deities, Apah (Waters), "That" is turned into "Those": and to indicate the masculine name, Prajāpati (Lord of Creation), "That" changes into the masculine "He" (सः)

[The Svetāśvatara Upanishad tries to be more grammatical and logical by changing "Those" in the feminine and "He" in the masculine into "That" (तद्) in the neuter. It changes the last section of the verse into

तद् आपस् तत् प्रजापतिः । श्वेताश्वतर उ. ४।२

Apah (waters) are That, Prajāpati (Lord of Creation) is That.]

(64)

The One Deity

In the following the Deity (in the masculine) is described as the One :

सुपर्णं विप्राः कवयो वचोभिर्
एकं सन्तं बहुधा कल्पयन्ति ।
छन्दांसि च दधतो अध्वरेषु
ग्रहान् त्सोमस्य मिमते द्वादश ॥ ऋ. १०।११४।५

The Beautiful-winged, though He is one, the wise poets shape, with songs, in many figures.
And while they grasp the hymns at sacrifices, they measure out twelve chalices of Soma. (*R.* X. 114. 5).

The verse implies that there is One God spoken of in many ways by the sage-poets and worshipped by them by the recitation of hymns and offering of soma-juice at *yajñas*.

(65)

All Deities are One Deity

In the following we find a non-symbolic expression of the unity of all Deities who are but aspects of the Same :

त्वम् अग्न इन्द्रो वृषभः सताम् असि
त्वं विष्णुर् उरुगायो नमस्यः ।
त्वं ब्रह्मा रयिविद् ब्रह्मणस्पते
त्वं विधर्तः सचसे पुरन्ध्या ॥ ३ ॥ ऋ. २।१
त्वम् अग्ने राजा वरुणो धृतव्रतस्
त्वम् मित्रो भवसि दस्म ईड्यः ।
त्वम् अर्यमा सत्पतिर् यस्य संभुजं
त्वम् अंशो विदथे देव भाजयुः ॥ ४ ॥ ऋ. २।१
त्वम् अग्ने अदितिर् देव दाशुषे
त्वं होत्रा भारती वर्धसे गिरा ।

त्वम् इळा शतहिमासि दक्षसे
त्वं वृत्रहा वसुपते सरस्वती ॥ ऋ. २।१।११

Thou O Agni! art Indra, the Hero of heroes.
Thou art Vishnu of the mighty stride, adorable.
Thou, O Brahmanaspati, art Brahman who possesses wealth,
Thou, O Sustainer, tendest us with wisdom. (3)
Thou, O Agni, art King Varuna whose laws stand fast;
Thou as Mitra, wonder-worker, art adorable;
Thou art Aryaman, Lord of heroes, enriching all;
O Thou God! Thou liberal Ansha in the synod. (4)
Thou, God Agni, art Aditi to the offerer of oblation;
Thou, Hotra Bharati, art glorified by the song;
For conferring power, Thou art the hundred-wintered Ila;
Thou, Lord of wealth, art Vritra-slayer and Saraswati.
(11) (*R.* II. 7.1-11).

Here Agni has been identified generally with all other Deities, male and female. This implies all Deities (देवता) stand for One Divine Being. These verses in detail say the same as *R.* I. 164 (No. 60) or *Y*. 32. 1 (No. 63) which identify all Deities with One Divine Essence.

(66)

God is One

All Deities being One, there is no contradiction in saying that Any of Them is The One. In the following and many other verses Indra is spoken of as The One:

य एको अस्ति दंसना
महाँ उग्रो अभि व्रतैः। ऋ. ८।१।२७

He who is One, wonderful, mighty and strong by holy laws.
(*R.* VIII. 1.27.)

इन्द्र इत् सोमपा एक
इन्द्रः सुतपा विश्वायुर्
अन्तर् देवान् मर्त्यांश्च। ऋ. ८।२।४

Indra is the One Drinker of libation,
Indra, Drinker of the pressed juice, Life of all,
Among celestials and mortals. (*R.* VIII. 2-4).

स विश्वस्य करुणस्येश एकः ऋ. १।१००।७

He is the One Lord of all holy service.

अयम् एक इत्था पुरूरु चष्टे वि विश्पतिः

तस्य व्रतान्यनु वश्चरामसि ॥ ऋ. ८।२५।१६

Here this One God, the Lord of men, looks forth exceeding far and wide; and we, for your welfare, observe His holy laws. (*R*. VIII. 25.16.)

(67)

The Nonpareil

There is no equal, no parallel to Him.

न तस्य प्रतिमा ऽ अस्ति

यस्य नाम महद् यशः । य. (वा) ३२।३

There is no parallel to Him whose glory, verily, is great. (*Y*. 32-3).

Also see the *Rigveda* which speaks of the Model for all :—

यो विश्वस्य प्रतिमानं बभूव

यो अच्युतच्युत् स जनास इन्द्रः । ऋ. २।१२।९

He who is the Model for all,
He who shakes the unshaken,
He, O men, is God. (*R*. II. 12-9; See No. 132.)

[Here Indra is the Deity]

(68)

All Gods in One

In the following All Deities become One in Indra :

महत् तद् वः कवयश्चारु नाम

यद्ध देवा भवथ विश्व इन्द्रे ।

सख ऋभुभिः पुरुहूत प्रियेभिर्

इमां धियं सातये तक्षता नः ॥ ऋ. ३।५४।१७

That is, Ye Poets ! your great and lovely title—
that All Ye Deities exist in Indra.
O Friend, much-invoked! Thou art with thy dear Ribhus:
frame this our hymn for our welfare.

It is said in the same hymn that there is "One All," pervading everything :

एजद् ध्रुवं पत्यते विश्वम् एकं
चरत् पतत्रि विषुणं वि जातम् ॥ ऋ. ३।५४।८

One All is Lord of the moving and the steady, of what walks, what flies—this multiform creation.

[One All, विश्वम् एकम्, is in the neuter gender implying One Divine All-embracing Essence.]

Thus All Gods are ONE ALL—One in Many, One having many aspects. Hence according to this conception, to say " Ye All Gods " (विश्वे देवाः) and to say "Thou All God" (विश्वदेव) as well as to call any God "All-God" (विश्वदेव) are to imply the same meaning. Because "They All" stand ultimately for the ONE Essence (एकम्).

Note here the mystical indifference to quantity and number in respect of the Ultimate.

Similarly, take the following refrain of a hymn :

महद् देवानाम् असुरत्वम् एकम् । ऋ.३।५५।१-२२

Great and single is the Divinity of the Gods.

(69)

One without a Second, a Third....

य एतं देवम् एकवृतं वेद । १५
न द्वितीय न तृतीयश् चतुर्थो नाप्युच्यते । १६
न पञ्चमो न षष्ठः सप्तमो नाप्युच्यते । १७
नाष्टमो न नवमो दशमो नाप्युच्यते । १८
स सर्वस्मै वि पश्यति यच्च प्राणति यच्च न । १९
तमिदं निगतं सहः स एष एक एकवृद् एक एव । २०
सर्वे अस्मिन् देवा एकवृतो भवन्ति । २१ अ. १३।४

(Verse No. 15 is repeated after each of the following verses.)

To him who knows this God simply as One.
Neither second nor third nor fourth is He called.
Neither fifth nor sixth nor seventh is He called.
Neither eighth nor ninth nor tenth is He called.
He oversees all—what breathes and what breathes not.
To Him goes the conquering (supreme) power. He is the One, the One Alone.
In Him All Deities become one Alone.

(*Ath.* XIII 4.)

(70)

One in Many

तावांस्ते मघवन् महिमोपो ते तन्वः शतम् ॥ ४४
उपो ते बध्वे बद्धानि यदि वासि न्यर्बुदम् ॥ ४५ . १३.४

Such is Thy greatness, O Liberal Lord! a hundred bodily forms are Thine.
Millions are in Thy million, or Thou art a billion in Thyself. (*Ath.* XIII. 4.)

(71)

The Formless

स पर्यगाच् छुक्रम् अकायम् अव्रणम् अस्नाविरं शुद्धम्
अपापविद्धम् ।
कविर् मनीषी परिभूः स्वयम्भूर् याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान् व्यदधाच्
छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥ —यजु. (वा.) ४०।८

He [the man who knows] has attained the bright, the unbodied, the unwounded, the unsinewed, the pure,—attained
That which evil has not penetrated.
He, the Poet, the wise, the (all-) encompassing, the self existent, has prescribed aims, according to fundamental principles, unto the everlasting years.

(*Yajur.* XL. 8.)

The prose passage has a philosophical vein, typical of the Upanishad.

(72)

The All-pervading

We find a more typically Vedic expression of the same idea in the following :—

य: समाम्यो ३ वरुणो यो व्याम्यो ३
य: संदेश्यो ३ वरुणो यो विदेश्यः ।
यो दैवो वरुणो यश्च मानुषः ॥ अ. ४।१६।८

God is That in which things converge,
He is That from which things diverge ;
He is of our own land, He is of foreign land ;
He is divine, He is human.

(*A.* IV. 16.8.)

[Here Varuna is the Deity]

In the verse quoted above the all-pervasiveness of the Divinity is indicated by the application of mutually opposite terms, beginning with सम and जि, implying union and opposition, respectively (see No. 85 below).

[The description of God as " of our own land " (संदेश्य i.e. समदेश्य) and " of foreign land " (विदेश्य) is significant. According to narrow religious views only the members of one's own group or locality are considered as favourites of God and outsiders are regarded as heathens, infidels, etc., enjoying no Divine bliss. But according to the Veda, God is as much your own as another's; *to be foreign is not to be un-Godly or God-forsaken.*]

Again, it is a characteristic of mysticism to seek 'God in God', 'God in man' and 'God in Nature'. Here the dual idea of 'God in God' and 'God in man' is expressed by the terms दैव (divine) and मानुष (human).

(73)

God in the Ocean and in the Drop

In the following verse we have the idea of Divine all-pervasiveness expressed in terms of space. God is in

the vast, He is in the little. In fact, in the mystic conception, space, like number or time or causality, is of no account.

उतेयं भूमिर् वरुणस्य राज्ञ

उतासौ द्यौर् बृहती दूरेअन्ता ।

उतो समुद्रौ वरुणस्य कुक्षी

उतास्मिन्नल्प उदके निलीनः ॥ अ. ४।१६।३

This earth is the possession of God, the King;
and the high heaven whose ends are far asunder;
And both the seas are His loins;
and He lies in this small drop of water.
(*A.* IV. 16.3.)

[Varuna is the Deity here]

[This idea is expressed in the Upanishad in the peculiar Upanishadic style :

अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान् ॥ कठ, २०।४९

(The Atman) is smaller than the small and greater than the great.

The *Bhagavad Gita* expresses the idea of God in the minute—

अणोरणीयांसम्—भ. गी. ८।९

Minuter than the minute.]

(74)

God is Everywhere

The following concrete expression of the all-pervasiveness of the Divine is typically Vedic :

यस् तिष्ठति चरति यश्च वञ्चति

यो निलायं चरति यः प्रतङ्कम् ।

द्वौ संनिषद्य यन्मन्त्रयेते

राजा तद् वेद वरुणस् तृतीयः ॥ अ.।४।१६।२

Whoever stands or walks or who moves in secret,
who goes to his lying down or his uprising;
What two men, sitting together, whisper to each other;
all that God, the King, knows: He is the Third present there.
(*A.* IV. 16.2.)

(75)

The All-seeing

सर्वं तद् राजा वरुणो वि चष्टे

यद् अन्तरा रोदसी यत् परस्तात् ।

संख्याता अस्य निमिषो जनानाम्

अक्षानिव श्वघ्नी नि मिनोति तानि ॥ अ. ४।१६।५

All that God, the King, beholds--what lies between the heavens and what is beyond them ;
He has counted the twinklings of men's eye-lids ;
As the dice-player the dice, so He lays down His statutes.
(*A.* IV. 16 5)

(76)

He is in Every Direction

The following is also a typically Vedic and concrete expression of the idea of Divine all-pervasiveness :

सविता पश्चातात् सविता पुरस्तात्

सवितोत्तरात्तात् सविताधरात्तात् ।

सविता नः सुवतु सर्वतातिं

सविता नो रासतां दीर्घम् आयुः ॥ ऋ. १०।३६।१४

The Deity from westward, the Deity from eastward, the Deity from northward, the Deity from southward.
May He send us all bliss, may He grant us long life.
(*R.* X. 36.14)

[The Deity is Savitṛi]

For रासताम् Compare— रासि क्षयम्

Grant us a home. (R II. 11. 14.)

(77)

The Divinity in Every Order of Reality

अदितिर् द्यौर् अदितिर् अन्तरिक्षम्

अदितिर् माता स पिता स पुत्रः ।

विश्वे देवा अदितिः पञ्चजना

अदितिर् जातम् अदितिर् जनित्वम् ॥

ऋ. १।८९।१० य. २५।२३ अ. ७।६।१

The Divinity is the heaven, the Divinity is the mid-region ;
the Divinity is the Mother, the Father, the Son ;
The Divinity is All Deities, the Divinity is the five-classed men,
the Divinity is all that is born and will be born.
(*R.* I. 89. 10. Also *Y. A.*)

Here the Divinity is conceived as feminine : Aditi (अदिति). She has elsewhere been described as the Mighty Mother (मातरं महीम् अदितिं नाम । यजु ९।५).

The Divinity is the underlying Spirit in Nature, in human relations : the unitary Principle in the multiple Deities (देव) and in the multiple humanity (the tribes or nations) ; and the Divine Power unites the universe not only in terms of space, but also in terms of time, pervading the past, the present and the future.

[The Divinity as the Feminine Power or Spirit became the object of worship in Tantra. Compare the following in *Chandi* from Markandeya Purana where the above idea is expressed in different language :

या देवी सर्वभूतेषु मातृरूपेण संस्थिता ।

नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥

(*Part* II, 5·73.)

The Goddess who exists in all beings as Mother, obeisance to Her ! Obeisance to Her ! Obeisance to Her ! Obeisance ! Obeisance !]

(78)

The Divine in Man

तस्माद् वै विद्वान् पुरुषम् इदं ब्रह्मेति मन्यते ।

सर्वा ह्यस्मिन् देवता गावो गोष्ठ इवासते ॥ अ. ११।८।३२

Therefore one who knows man regards him as this Brahman. Verily all Deities abide in him as cows in the pen.
(*A*. XI. 8, 32.)

Here the neuter singular "Brahman" (the Divinity) and the masculine plural, "Deities" (देवताः) are synonymous terms.

Cf. the following from the *Rigveda* (also *Y*. 33-98):

देवासो हि ष्मा मनवे समन्यवो
विश्वे साकं सरातयः । ऋ. ८।२७।१४

Verily the Gods are of one spirit with men,
All common possessors of graces. (*R*. VIII. 27. 14. *Y*.)

Also see (10) above.

(79)

God in Male and Female, in Youth and Old

The idea of God in Man is particularised in a poetic way in the following:

त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमान् असि
त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी ।
त्वं जीर्णो दंडेन वंचसि
त्वं जातो भवसि विश्वतोमुखः ॥ अ. १०।८।२७

O God (Brahman)! Thou art woman, Thou art man;
Thou art boy, Thou maiden.
Thou art the old man tottering with the staff;
Thou existest in all forms. (*A*. X. 8.27.)

[There have been faiths in post-Vedic times in India and abroad which consider woman as inferior to man, and girl as inferior to boy. The Veda states clearly that they are equal and equally endowed with the Divine spark in them.

Note the graceful precedence given to woman.]

(80)
The All-pervading Being
(पुरुष)

The idea of the Divinity as an all-pervading Being has been expressed in grand language in the "Purusha" hymn of the Veda. And in that hymn the mystical conception of the Many in One finds a remarkable illustration. The Purusha hymn occurs in all the four Vedas. [*Rigveda* X. 90, *Samaveda* 617, *Yajurveda* (V. S.) XXXI, *Atharvaveda* XIX 6.]

The Divinity Immanental in the Universe : in Terms of Space

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ।

स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वा ऽत्यतिष्ठद् दशाङ्गुलम् ॥

ऋ. १०।९०।१, यजु. साम, अथर्व.

The Supreme Being, thousand-headed,
thousand-eyed, thousand-footed ;
He, pervading the earth on all sides, transcends the ten directions. (*R.* X. 90. 1; *Y*, *S*. and *A*.)

'Thousand' (सहस्र) means 'innumerable.' Hence there is no arithmetical coherence between head and hands. The *Atharvaveda*, however, attempts such coherence by reading—

सहस्रबाहुः पुरुषः । अ. १९।६।१

The Supreme Being, thousand-handed.

"Thousand-headed" etc. imply the manifestation of the Divinity through the vastness of creation. दशांगुलम्—"Ten fingers"—are the ten directions or regions. [Compare the "ten surrounding arms" in the following :—

इयं या नीच्यर्किणी रूपा रोहिण्या कृता ।

चित्रेव प्रत्यदर्श्यायत्यन्तर्दशसु बाहुषु ॥ ऋ. ८।१०१।१३

She (Ushas) yonder bending low, rich in rays, clad in red hues,
Is seen advancing like one wonderful, amid the ten surrounding arms.]

(81)

The Divinity Immanental in the Universe: in Terms of Time

पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं यद् भूतं यच्च भव्यम् ।
उतामृतत्वस्येशानो यद् अन्नेनातिरोहति ॥ ऋ. १०।९०।२
य. सा. अ.

Purusha is all that has been and that will be;
And He is the Lord of immortality which transcends
through matter (food). (*R.* X. 90. 2; *Y. S. A.*)

Here the Divinity is described as all-pervading in respect of time—He pervades the past and the future; just as in the present, in respect of space, He pervades all regions (ten quarters). अन्न is food, material sustenance. When we contemplate the Absolute existing in space and time, we find His Being glorified through the world of matter and phenomena just as the body of man prospers through food.

Thus the Divine as Purusha makes the material universe a means of Self-expression. The Divine manifests His glory through creation.

[In later religious ideology this Purusha conception is represented by that of Bhagavad—the Lord of splendour (भग=splendour). The speciality about this conception is that, instead of the neutral (निरुपाधि) Absolute (अक्षर) the God of qualities (ईश्वर) is contemplated. So in this conception, the beauty and splendour of the universe and man are part of the glory (उपाधि) of the Divine. Hence matter is not alien to God; the finite world of time and space only manifests the splendour of God.]

(82)

God is Greater than His Splendour

एतावान् अस्य महिमाऽतो ज्यायाँश्च पूरुषः ।
पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि ॥ ऋ. १०।९०।३
य. (वा) ३१।३, अ. १९।६।३

Such [that He pervades all space and time] is
His splendour ; but Purusha is greater than this,
All beings are a quarter of Him ; three quarters make
the immortality in the supreme region.
(*R.* X. 90-3; *Y. A.*)

This verse implies that the Divinity is not coextensive with the universe or creation. The splendour of the universe is only an aspect of Him ; He has other aspects that are unmanifested and transcendental.

The arithmetical 'one-quarter' and 'three-quarters' are not to be taken literally, in the quantitative sense.

(83)

Creation, a Grand Sacrifice

What is God's creation ? In what relation does He stand to it ? It is not like the making of a pot by the potter. It is a spiritual act—a sacrifice—through which the Absolute (अक्षर) reveals Its splendour.

The idea of sacrifice has been poetically worked out in the Veda.

यत् पुरुषेण हविषा देवा यज्ञम् अतन्वत ।
वसन्तो अस्यासीद् आज्यं ग्रीष्म इध्मः शरद्धविः ।
ऋ. १०।९०।६, य. (वा) ३१।१४, अ. १९।६।१०

Of the yajña (sacrifice) that the Shining Ones
prepared with Purusha as the oblation,
Spring was the butter, summer the wood and
autumn the offering. (*R.* Xi 90.6; *Y.—A.*)

Here it is said that creation proceeds from *yajna* (sacrifice). Elsewhere in the *Rigveda* it is said that creation proceeds from *tapas* (spiritual ardour) :

ऋतं च सत्यं चाभिद्धात् तपसोऽध्यजायत । ऋ. १०।१९०।१

Eternal Order and Truth were born of perfect spiritual
ardour.

In the *Atharvaveda* yajña is classified with tapas as a power that upholds the earth :

सत्यं बृहत् ऋतम् उग्रं दीक्षा तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं धारयन्ति ।

अ. १२।१।१

Truth, order that is great and stern, consecration, spiritual striving, prayer, sacrifice—these uphold the earth.

Thus yajña as the means of creation indicates the spiritual nature of the latter. Creation is not mechanical construction : it is a supreme spiritual act revealing Divine splendour.

(84)

The Divine Architect

(विश्वकर्मन्)

The Divine Architect—विश्वकर्मन्—is but another aspect of Purusha—the Divinity manifested through creation. The Veda applies similar terms to Vishvakarman, but there is a slight difference. The Vishvakarman hymns emphasise the Divine Personality :

विश्वतश्चक्षुर् उत विश्वतोमुखो
विश्वतोबाहुर् उत विश्वतस्पात् ।
सं बाहुभ्यां धमति सं पतत्रैर्
द्यावाभूमी जनयन् देव एकः ॥ ऋ. १०।८१।३, अ. १३।२।२६,

य. (वा.) १७।१९

He who has eyes on all sides and mouth on all sides,
arms on all sides and feet on all sides ;
He, the One God, producing heaven and earth,
wields them together with His arms as wings.
(*R.* X. 81-3 ; also *Y.* & *A.*).

The Vedic verses quoted above also appear in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad (श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषद्), III. 14. The following verses there, coming after three expository verses on the Vedic conception of the Purusha, may be taken as explaining the mystical significance of the

Purusha—that He may also be described in opposite terms as having no feet, no eyes etc. :

अपाणिपादो जवनो ग्रहीता
पश्यत्यचक्षु: स श्रणत्यकर्णः ।
स वेत्ति वेद्यं न च तस्यास्ति वेत्ता
तम् आहुर् अग्र्यं पुरुषं महान्तम् ॥

श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषत् ३।१९

Without hands and feet, He grasps and walks ;
Without eyes He sees, without ears, He hears,
He knows what is knowable, but there is no knower of Him ;
Him they have called the Great Primal Being (Purusha).

(85)

The Home of All Beings

From the idea of the One Creator we come to another mystic conception—the unity of the universe in Him :

वेनस् तत् पश्यन् निहितं गुहा सद्
यत्र विश्वं भवत्येकनीडम् ।
तस्मिन्निदं सं च वि चैति सर्वं
स ओत: प्रोतश्च विभूः प्रजासु ॥ य. (वा.) ३२।८

The loving sage beholds that mysterious Existence
Wherein the universe comes to have one home ;
Therein unites and therefrom emanates all.
The Lord is the warp and woof in the created beings.
(Y. 32. 8.)

In this verse the Divinity has been spoken of both as the Ultimate Essence, in the neuter gender, as तत् सत That Existence, and as the Lord, in the masculine—विभूः गुहानिहितम्, 'hidden in the cave,' is a symbolical expression for "mystical" or "mysterious."

[With 'The Lord is warp and woof in created things,' compare *Bhagavad Gita* :

मयि सर्वम् इदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव । भ. गी. ७।७

All this is threaded in Me (the Divine) as pearls on a string.

The word प्रोत is common between the passages.

In the *Atharvaveda* (Ch. II. 1. 1), instead of the bold poetic metaphor, एकनीडम् 'one nest'—there is the more philosophical एकरूपम् — 'one form,' 'alike.' Presumably the *Atharvaveda* replaced the poetic metaphor by a philosophical expression (though some orientalists think the *Yajurveda* borrowed the verse from the *Atharvaveda.*)

[Universal fellowship, which was preached by the Vedas in ancient times, has been set again and again as a human ideal in different ages by poets, saints, and mystics. See (26) above.]

(86)

The Atman

अकामो धीरो अमृतः स्वयंभू
रसेन तृप्तो न कुतश्चनोनः ।
तमेव विद्वान् न बिभाय मृत्योर्
आत्मानं धीरम् अजरं युवानम् ॥ अ. १०।८।४४

Desireless, firm, immortal, Self-existent,
contented with the essence, lacking nothing, is He.
One fears not death who has known Him,
the Soul (Atman)—serene, ageless, youthful.
(*A.* X. 8.44.)

Here we find the conception of the Divine as the Supreme Spirit (Atman), ever steady, ever young, undecaying. This conception is very common in Upanishads.

As Divine attributes are also ideal human attributes, the highest efforts of sages have been directed in approximating this ideal.

The conception of the Yogi is similar upto a point to the conception of the Divinity here. The Yogi is desireless (अकाम) : and hence free from the impact of animal nature, he is serene in the heroism of the spirit (धीर) ; he is satisfied with the essence of things (रस), perceived spiritually, and hence does not depend on sense-perception for happiness ; and so he becomes complete within himself. And though the physical body is subject to decay, he remains unworn (अजर) and ever youthful (युवा) in spirit and has no fear of death. This transcendence of animal nature and of old age and death makes a high type of man ; he may be called the spiritual superman. [Some think all these adjectives describe the sage who knows the Atman.]

रस (rasa) is a most significant word in Sanskrit. A Sanskrit rhetorician has described poetry as "वाक्यं रसात्मकम्" "language with flavour in it." In this sense we may speak of the Divine as a Poet, enjoying the sweet flavour of reality : hence, He is not only सद् Existence, not only चिद्—Intelligence, but also आनन्द—Joy. The association of *rasa* (रस) with the Divine lies at the basis of the Bhakti (भक्ति) cult.

Compare the *Taittiriya Upanishad* :

रसो वै सः। रसं ह्येवायं लब्ध्वाऽऽनन्दी भवति।

तैत्तिरीय उपनिषत। २।७

He, verily, is rasa (the Essence, the Source of flavour). By attaining Him, the *rasa*—the Essence—one is filled with joy.

In the mantra preceding this the *Atharvaveda* speaks of the Divine Spirit being within the body of man, which is described as 'nine-portalled' and compared to a lotus :

पुण्डरीकं नवद्वारं त्रिभिर् गुणेभिर् आवृतम् ।
तस्मिन् यद् यक्षम् आत्मन्वत् तद् वै ब्रह्मविदो विदुः ॥

अ. १०।८।४३

Men of divine knowledge know the living Spirit that abides in the lotus that is the nine-portalled body (of man), enclosed within triple bonds. (*A*. X. 8.43.)

The Veda says the Spirit lives within the limitations of the mortal body imposed by the three gunas (i.e. *sottva,* light, *rajas,* force, and *tamas,* darkness), and these are transcended with the blossoming of the lotus that is the body. (The fully blossomed lotus has been used in India as a symbol of spiritual enlightenment).

[The conception of the ideal person as अकाम, "desire-less" has formed the essential element of Buddhistic ethics and metaphysics. According to these, it is काम, "desire", that involves us in the pursuit of pleasure and all the evils of life : one who has renounced desire keeps clear of all those evil consequences. The supreme state of being, in which desire has been extinguished, has been called Nirvana (निर्वाण)].

(87)

The Universal Soul

चित्रं देवानाम् उद्गाद् अनीकं
चक्षुर् मित्रस्य वरुणस्याग्नेः ।
आप्रा द्यावापृथिवी अन्तरिक्षं
सूर्य आत्मा जगतस् तस्थुषश्च । ऋ. १।११५।१

य. (वा.) ७।४२, १३।४६, अ. १३।२।३५, २०। १०७।१४

The marvellous Presence of the Gods has risen,
The Eye of Mitra, Varuna and Agni :
The Soul of all that moves or stands still,—
Surya, pervading the heaven, the earth, the mid-region.
(*R*. I. 115. 1; also *Y. A.*)

Here Surya is spoken of as the अनीक (face, presence) of all Gods, i.e. the *Symbol* for the Divinity.

Similarly, He is the *eye*—the seeing faculty, the inner intellectual principle—of the Divinity, contemplated as Mitra, Varuna and Agni. This is just another form of saying—

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणम् अग्निम् आहुर्......

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति । ऋ. १।१६४।४६

They have spoken of Him as Agni, Mitra, Varuna, Indra; the one Existence the sages speak of in many ways.

[Perhaps here one should say, एकं चिद् — there is 'One Intellectual Power'—the *eye* of Gods. Finally, the idea is more fully stressed by the use of the word आत्मन् for Surya : "He is the *Soul* in all beings, moving and non-moving." This Soul idea is the dominant conception of the Divine in the Upanishads].

As in the *gayatri* verse, so here, the Sun is not the Sun only of the material world (पृथिवी) but of the other two worlds also : द्यौ and अन्तरिक्ष, the sky and the mid-region.

The *Yajurveda* identifies the individual with the universal soul :

योऽसावादित्ये पुरुषः सोऽसावहम् ।

ओ ३ म् खं ब्रह्म ॥

The Spirit (Purusha) that is in the sun, that Spirit am I; Om, the eternal Brahman. (*Y. VS.* 40.17.)

(88)

The Quest of the Divine

Mysticism, being an experience, does not consist only of revelation—the complete mastery of ultimate knowledge ; it also signifies a quest of the unknown. It asks questions and the answers come as new visions unfold themselves.

अचिकित्वान् चिकितुषश् चिद् अत्र

कवीन् पृच्छामि विद्मने न विद्वान् ।

वि यस् तस्तम्भ षळिमा रजांस्य-
जस्य रूपे किमपि स्विद् एकम् ॥ ऋ. १।१६४।६,
अ. ९।९।७

Unknowing I ask of those who know—the sages—
as one ignorant for the sake of knowledge:
What is that ONE that has upheld the six regions in the form of the Unborn? (*R.* I. 164.6 also *A.*)

For एकम् (One) compare No. 61.

(89)

Whom Shall We Worship ?

In the hymn, of which the following is the eighth stanza, the refrain, occurring eight times, is a query regarding the Ultimate Reality.

यश्चिदापो महिना पर्यपश्यद्
दक्षं दधाना जनयन्तीर् यज्ञम् ।
यो देवेष्वधि देव एक आसीत्
कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥ ऋ. १०।१२१।८,
य. (वा). २७।२६, ३२।७

Who is the Deity we shall adore with our oblation?
The Divinity who in His glory surveyed the floods,
Giving spiritual power and generating worship,
Who is the one God above all gods.
(*R.* X. 121.8, *Y.*)

The word Deva has been used both in a general and in a particular sense, e.g.—

यद् देवा देवम् अयजन्त विश्वे

When to God all gods paid worship.
(*R.* X. 130.3).

Such use of the word is part of the Vedic idiom.
God is to be known anew by the questioning spirit. :

एतावतस् ते वसो विद्याम शूर नव्यसः ऋ. ८।५०।९

O gracious hero ! may we learn anew to know thee as Thou art. (*R.* VIII. 50-9)

(90)

The Final Mystery

In the following the Veda leaves the final question on ultimate things unanswered :

को अद्धा वेद क इह प्र वोचत्
कुत आजाता कुत इयं विसृष्टिः ।
अर्वाग् देवा अस्य विसर्जनेना-
ऽथा को वेद यत आबभूव ॥ ऋ. १०।१२९।६

Who verily knows, and who can here declare it—
Whence was it born and whence came this creation ?
And did the Shining Ones appear with its production ?
But, then, who knows whence it has arisen ?
(*R.* X. 129-6).

Compare the following verse which points to the mystical nature of the conception of Deities :

को अद्धा वेद क इह प्र वोचद्
देवाँ अच्छा पथ्या ३ का समेति ।
ददृश्र एषाम् अवम् आ सदांसि
परेषु या गुह्येषु व्रतेषु ॥ ऋ. ३।५४।५

Who knows this truly and who will now declare it,
What paths lead together to the Gods ?
Only the lowest aspects of the existence of Those are seen,
Who exist on supreme, mystical planes. (*R.* III. 54.5.)

The query leads to the final mystery of the Universe.

(91)

Who Knows ?

इयं विसृष्टिर् यत आबभूव
यदि वा दधे यदि वा न ।
यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्
त्सो अङ्ग वेद यदि वा न वेद ॥ ऋ. १०।१२९।७

He, from whom this creation came into being,
Whether He upheld it or He did not,
He who oversees it in the eternal region,
He verily knows it or perhaps He does not know.
(*R.* X. 129.7.)

The Veda recognises the Supreme Being overseeing all (अध्यक्ष: परमे व्योमन्), but leaves unanswered the question of whence—from what material—this creation came into being.

In the Purusha hymn the Veda gives a symbolical answer through the analogy of sacrifice : that a yajña was performed with the Primal Being, in which spring was the butter, summer the fuel and autumn the libation. Here, to a logical query, to which a literal answer is required, no reply is given. This shows that such a question is better left open.

This attitude, typical of higher thought, leads to a very delicately poised sense of truth which precludes every type of dogmatism. In this sense the Vedic attitude here is philosophical rather than religious, in the elementary sense of the latter term, according to which a fixed and literal explanation is given in respect of every aspect of the unseen reality.

Lord Buddha was maintaining this Vedic attitude when he kept silent about the Ultimate Reality. He neither accepted nor rejected the theory of the Ultimate Being. The story in the *Kevatta Sutta of Digha Nikäya*, said to be told by Lord Buddha, is a fictional rendering of the Vedic hymn on Creation (नासदासीत् सूक्त) and of the verses that have been quoted above from it.

The story says that a certain Bhikshu in a state of samädhi wished to know where earth, water, fire and air were finally dissolved. With the help of his spiritual powers he visited four *Devatas*. They were unable to answer the question and asked him to go to Indra. Indra directed him to some higher Divinity. The Bhikshu moved to higher heavens till he found himself in *Brahmaloka.* There he put his question to Brahmā who found

that he did not know the answer to this question. But he did not wish to expose his ignorance. He described his divine glories, but the Bhikshu said he came to know not what Brahmä was like, but what was the final state into which the four elements were dissolved. Then Brahmä took him aside and said, "All the Devatas living in my heaven believe me to be omniscient; I will not confess my ignorance before them. But really I don't know where the four elements finally lose themselves."

Brahma's "I don't know" in the Buddhistic story is obviously a folk-tale rendering of—

यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्
त्सो अङ्ग वेद यदि वा न वेद ॥

He who oversees it in the eternal region,
He verily knows it or perhaps He does not know.

The story proceeds further. Brahmä asks the Bhikshu to go back to Buddha and ask him the question. He comes to Buddha and puts his question—"Where do the four elements finally lose themselves?" Buddha says the question is wrongly put. It should be—"Where do the four elements lose their indentity; where do length and shortness, the gross and the fine, the real and the unreal, name and form, cease to exist?" and the reply to the question is—

"In the consciousness beyond the power of vision, and in the eternally bright lustre, the four elements lose their identity."

Here the state beyond the real and the unreal refers to the same as described in the Veda :

नासद् आसीन्नो सद् आसीत् तदानीम्

Then there was neither unreality nor reality.

The metaphysical idea presented in the above Vedic verse has also been rendered into a curious popular story in *Skanda Purana.* But though crude, the legend has a

significance. It is that the ultimate truth cannot be stated as a simple fact; it is shrouded in mystery: the same idea as given in the Rigvedic verse quoted above. The story is this. Brahma and Vishnu both tried to trace the two ends of a vast *linga* (sign) which they found spreading before them. Vishnu assumed the form of a tortoise and went down, whilst Brahma embodied himself as a swan and flew upwards. Both travelled for one thousand years (of the gods) at the speed of the human mind and yet they could not fathom it. Vishnu came back and confessed his inability to reach the lower end; but Brahma falsely claimed to have found the upper end. The latter produced false witnesses; but a voice exposed these witnesses and cursed them as well as Brahma; whereas Vishnu received the blessing that he would be worshipped by the whole world.

The story, though belonging to the class of fairy tales, is just a commentary on the Vedic verses quoted above:

को अद्धा वेद क इह प्र वोचत्
कुत आजाता कुत इयं विसृष्टिः ।

Who verily knows and who can here declare it—
Whence was it born and whence came this creation?

(92)

What shall I speak?

वि मे कर्णा पतयतो वि चक्षुर्
वी३ दं ज्योतिर्हृदय आहितं यत् ।
वि मे मनश्चरति दूरआधीः
किं स्विद् वक्ष्यामि किमु नू मनिष्ये ॥ ऋ. ६।९।६

My ears open to hear, my eyes to see;
this Light within my spirit shines beyond;
My mind roams with its thoughts in the distance;
what shall I speak, and what, verily, shall I think?
(R. VI. 9-6).

The sage has an experience which cannot be interpreted in terms of the senses: before which the mind is

restless, unable to comprehend. He cannot reduce his experience to word or thought.

What is given in the Veda as a deep personal experience with subtle emotional modulations, is found in the Upanishad as an aphorism :

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते । अप्राप्य मनसा सह ।

तैत्तरीयोपनिषत् २।४

From which words return unattaining, with the mind.

This is intellectual and philosophic ; but the Vedic line is poetical and personal :

किं स्विद् वक्ष्यामि किमु नू मनिष्ये ?

What shall I speak ? What, verily, shall I think ?

Here we are brought into contact with an intense spiritual mood—the mental embarrassment before the final Mystery of the universe.

(93)

Mystical Language

चत्वारि वाक् परिमिता पदानि
तानि विदुर् ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः ।
गुहा त्रीणि निहिता नेङ्गयन्ति
तुरीयं वाचो मनुष्या वदन्ति ॥ ऋ. १।१६४।४५,

अ. ९।१०।२७

Speech of four types has been measured ;
The sages who are wise know them.
Three that are hidden in the cave (*i.e.* are mystic)
are ineffable.
Men speak the fourth (type of) speech.

(*R.* I. 164.45; *A.*)

The three types of speech that are ineffable are the silent speech—or the silence that is more eloquent than language—in respect of the infinite.

The mystic experience leads to silence because the ultimate is inexpressible. As the *Yajurveda* says :

अन्ताय बहुवादिनम् अनन्ताय मूकम् ॥ य. (वा). ३०।१९

For the finite the eloquent man, for the infinite the mute.

But the demand for expression is most urgent in man ; and the mystic sage finds that he must express what from the nature of the experience is ineffable. Failing to interpret in terms of the intellect he seeks the language of the spirit. First, he accepts poetry, with the subtle power of rhythm, as the medium of expression. Secondly, he extends the expressive power of words by investing them with symbolism. In a symbol far more is meant that meets the ear.

The expression गुहाहित *or* गुहानिहित has been frequently used in the Vedas for the Ultimate Mystery that is the Divine : e.g. :—

वेनस्तत् पश्यन् निहितं गुहा सद् । य. (वा.) ३२।८

The loving sage beholds That Being which is mysterious.

(94)

Revelation of the Sacred Word

बृहस्पते प्रथमं वाचो अग्रं
यत् प्रैरत नामधेयं दधानाः ।
यद् एषां श्रेष्ठं यद् अरिप्रम् आसीत्
प्रेणा तद् एषां निहितं गुहाविः ॥
सक्तुम् इव तितउना पुनन्तो
यत्र धीरा मनसा वाचम् अक्रत ।
अत्रा सखायः सख्यानि जानते
भद्रैषां लक्ष्मीः निहिताधि वाचि ॥ ऋ. १०।७१।१-२

The first and foremost speech, O Brihaspati,
that sages sent, giving names (to their visions),
Speech that was their best, was stainless—
it revealed with love the Divine Mystery within them.

And where they created the Word, sifting it with the spirit,
as they sift the flour with the sieve,
Therein have friends discovered their friendships
of which the beauties lie hidden in the Word.
(*R.* X. 71.1.2)

Here we find a reference to the Vedic revelation. Vak, the Word, is revealed in the soul of the sage, which receives it creatively. Through the revealed word men find an intimate friendship established among them, its beauties lying hidden in the word.

(95)

The Sage who sees

उत त्वः पश्यन् न ददर्श वाचम्
उत त्वः शृण्वन् न शृणोत्येनाम् ।
उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं १ वि सस्रे
जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासाः ॥ ऋ. १०।७१।४

There is the man who sees but has not seen Vak (the sacred Word) ; there is the man who hears but has not heard her ;
But to another she has revealed her noble form
as a loving wife, finely robed, reveals hers to her husband. (*R.* X. 71.4).

The Vedic sage has been called the Rishi, seer—seer of the mantra (मन्त्रद्रष्टा). The analogy of the wife is typical of the Veda, which holds the Grihasthashrama in high regard. (Cf. अनवद्या पतिजुष्टेव नारी — Like the spotless wife, beloved of her husband)—*R*. I. 73.3.)

(96)

Inequality among Sages

अक्षण्वन्तः कर्णवन्तः सखायो
मनोजवेष्वसमा बभूवुः ।
आदघ्नास उपकक्षास उ त्वे
ह्रदा इव स्नात्वा उ त्वे ददृश्रे ॥

हृदा तष्टेषु मनसो जवेषु
यद् ब्राह्मणाः संयजन्ते सखायः ।
अत्राह त्वं विजहुर् वेद्याभिर्
ओहब्रह्माणो वि चरन्त्यु त्वे ॥ ऋ. १०।७१।७-८

Friends, equally endowed with sight and hearing,
are unequal in the quickness of their spirit;
Some look like tanks that reach to the mouth or armpit,
and some like lakes wherein one can bathe.
When, with mental impulse fashioned by the heart,
Brahman friends sacrifice together,
Some, through their wisdom, leave others behind them,
and some walk about only boasting to be Brahmans.
(*R.* X. 71. 7.8.)

Some are great sages, some are small, and some, though fit enough for formal rituals, are no Brahmans at all; Brahmanood is a mere boast in their case.

(97)

Universality of Spiritual Knowledge

अश्विना सारघेण मा
मधुनाङ्क्त शुभस्पती ।
यथा भर्गस्वतीं वाचम्
आवदानि जनाँ अनु ॥ अ. ६।६९।२, ९।१।१९

Asvins! Lords of light!
fill me with sweet honey,
So that I may speak the glorious word
to the masses of mankind.
(*A.* VI 69. 2; IX. 1.19.)

The *Yajurveda* has a similar prayer (XXVI. 2) in which the word, कल्याणीम् (gracious, blessed), is used for भर्गस्वतीम् (glorious), and the word 'masses' is further amplified by saying, 'to the Brahmana and the Kshatriya, to the Vaishya and the Shudra, to my own people and to the foreigner.' (See No. 300)

The word भर्गस् (divine glory) appears in the famous gayatri mantra. (*R*. III 62.10). The Veda speaks of Divine glory in glorious language.

The truths revealed through the words of the Veda are not secrets to be carefully kept from the public. The sage who knows them feels called upon to declare them to his fellowmen, irrespective of their social or cultural status. This feature of the Vedic religion distinguishes it from occult sects. In this verse the sage prays for sweet speech so that he may give the sacred words to the whole human society.

[The so-called Brahmins of a later age who thought that the Vedas should not be taught to any one who was not a member of the Brahmin caste were going against the Veda itself.]

विभूति-योग

THE PATH OF SPLENDOUR

CHAPTER IV

विभूति-योग

The Path of Splendour

The Path of Mysticism (राज-योग) follows a super-sensuous perception; the Path of Splendour (विभूतियोग) the sense-perceptions themselves. Here the sage perceives the Divine presence in all that is splendid and beautiful in the universe. The path of Mysticism is the path of the sage (ऋषि) as a recluse (मुनि, योगी); the path of Splendour is the path of the sage as a poet (कवि). Spiritual consciousness on this plane is essentially poetic consciousness. The poet-sage expresses his exquisite astonishment before the visions of glory and wonder. With him worship is ecstatic wonder. As a result, the words of worship are as much poetry as part of religion. In fact the world has not known sublimer or more beautiful religious poetry than found in the Vedas.

The poetic-spiritual attitude that we have described (after the *Bhagavad Gita*) as the Path of Splendour (विभूति-योग) has this speciality—that it never loses touch with the material reality which is realised by sense-perception, though it seeks a transcendental beyond the senses. Though sometimes the prayer becomes purely abstract and conveys metaphysical and moral ideas, still, in its more typical form, the abstract idea is conveyed by an image of beauty and glory. This image carries with it the highest poetic value.

The source of all splendour is light. Hence light is the central object of admiration for the poet-sage. Light (ज्योतिः) is also the symbol for all splendour and glory of the spirit. It stands for truth (सत्य), order (ऋत), reality (सद्), goodness (स्वस्ति), glory (श्री), beauty (चारुता), intelligence (धी), wisdom (क्रतु), bliss (भद्र), immortality

(अमृत),—for God (देव) and the noble man (आर्य); whereas the opposite of light—darkness (तमस्) — stands for untruth (असत्य), disorder (अनृत), unreality (असत्) evil (अशिव, दुरित), ugliness (अश्री), ignorance (अविद्या), death (मृत्यु)—and for the Demon (वृत्र) and the wicked man (दस्यु, दास). Light is associated with fire (अग्नि), the sun (सूर्य), the moon (सोम), the dawn (उषा) etc.

The symbolisation of Agni led to the identification of the name with the inner Principle of light, whether associated with fire or lightning or the sun. Agni is thus contemplated as the Effulgent One, sending His light to earth, to the sky and to water, and supplying the life-energy to plants. Surya is the source of life. Thus he becomes the Inner Principle of light and life सूर्य आत्मा जगतस्तस्थुषश्च — "Surya, the Atman within what moves and what stands still." Extremely poetic are the visions of the breaking of Dawn (उषा) and the glory of light spreading over the world.

The negative and positive aspects of the Vedic religion may respectively be found in the conception of Indra: the killer of the power or darkness (वृत्रहा) and the bringer of light (स्वर्विद्).

(98)

The Light Divine

The following verse suggests the transcendental light through the earthly.

उद् वयं तमसस्परि ज्योतिष्पश्यन्त उत्तरम् ।
देवं देवत्रा सूर्यम् अगन्म ज्योतिरुत्तमम् ॥ ऋ. १।५०।१०
य. (वा.) २०।२१, २७।१०, ३५।१८, ३८।२४.
अ. ७।५३।७

Looking at the transcendent light beyond the darkness,
we have come to Surya, God among gods,
The Light that is most excellent.
(*R.* I. 50.10; also *Y.*, *A.*)

ज्योति: ordinarily means light, but उत्तमम्, transcendent, takes the idea to a higher plane. Surya, the Deity of this verse, though connected with the object of physical perception, implies more than a physical object: its light, 'most excellent,' symbolises the spiritual glory.

(99)

The Lord of Light

शीर्ष्ण: शीर्ष्णो जगतस् तस्थुषस् पतिं समया विश्वम् आ रज:
सप्त स्वसार: सुविताय सूर्यं वहन्ति हरितो रथे ॥ १५ ॥
तच्चक्षुर् देवहितं शुक्रम् उच्चरत् ;
पश्येम शरद: शतं जीवेम शरद: शतम् ॥ १६ ॥ ऋ. ७।६६

Him who shines crest by crest equally on all,
Surya, the Lord of what moves and what is still,
The seven Sister Bays bear in the car, for (the world's) well-being.
That lustrous Eye, God-ordained, arising,
May we see a hundred autumns. May we live a hundred autumns. (*R.* VII. 66. 15-16.)

The union of light and life sums up, in the physical and the spiritual sense, the Vedic outlook on the world.

[The Deity is Surya]

(100)

Destroyer of Darkness and Evil

आ विबाध्या परिरापस् तमांसि च
ज्योतिष्मन्तं रथम् ऋतस्य तिष्ठसि ।
बृहस्पते भीमम् अमित्रदम्भनं
रक्षोहणं गोत्रभिदं स्वर्विदम् ॥ ऋ. २।२३।३

Having chased away the wicked ones and darkness,
Thou mountest Thy refulgent car of Order ;
The awful car, O Lord of wisdom ! that subdues the enemy,
Slays the wicked, cleaves the stall of light and finds the light. **(*R.* II. 23.3.)**

Here light (ज्योतिः) and Eternal Law—Goodness (ऋत)—are identified and hence darkness (तमस्) implies the power of evil—the enemy (अमित्र), the wicked one (रक्षस्).

In *Rigveda* X. 103.6 the expression गोत्रभिदम्—cleaver of the stall of kine is followed by गोविदम्—'bringer of kine.' Here स्वर्विदम्—'bringer of light'—occurs for गोविदम्—'bringer of kine.' Evidently गो and स्वर् are synonymous terms meaning 'light.' So गोत्रभिदम् really means "cleaver of the stall of light."

The word भीम (awful) indicates the sternness of **Divine** Law (ऋत). It corresponds to the moral idea of light—*viz.* goodness.

[The Deity is Brahmanaspati, Lord of Prayer]

(101)

The Life-Giver

बृहत्सुम्नः प्रसवीता निवेशनो
जगतः स्थातुरुभयस्य यो वशी ।
स नो देवः सविता शर्म यच्छ-
त्वस्मे क्षयाय त्रिवरूथम् अंहसः ॥ ऋ. ४।५३।६

Most gracious God, who brings (the world) to life and keeps (it) in repose ;
He who controls both what moves and what is still ;
May He, Savita the God, grant us grace,
For serene life, with three-fold bar against evil.
(*R.* 4.53-6).

Here सविता—Savita, the Deity of the verse—has been described as प्रसवीता — the producer of life. Compare—प्र च सुवाति सविता. (५.८२।९) 'He who generates life is Savita.'

The prayer is of a general type, seeking protection against evil.

(102)

Glorious and Beloved Supremacy

अस्य हि स्वयशस्तरं सवितुः कच्चन प्रियम्।
न मिनन्ति स्वराज्यम् ॥ ऋ. ५।८२।२

This Savita's own supremacy, most glorious and beloved,
None can diminish. (*R.* V. 82.2.)

Here the effulgence of Savita is not only glorious, but also beloved. The word *Svarajya* (स्वराज्य one's own supremacy or sovereignty) has often been used in the Vedas.

(103)

Source of Goodness

विश्वानि देव सवितर् दुरितानि परा सुव।
यद् भद्रं तन्न आ सुव ॥ ऋ. ५।८२।५, य. (वा.) ३०।३

Savita ! God ! send far away all evil ;
Send us what is good. (*R.* V. 82-5; *Y.*).

Here the idea of physical glory is converted into that of moral power.

[We found a word-play between Savita (सविता) and (प्रसवीता) (inspirer of life) ; here there is a word-play on Savita (सविता) and the verb सुव (move) in परा सुव, 'move away,' and आ सुव 'move in', 'bring', derived from the same root (सु, सू) as the word Savita(सविता).]

(104)

Source of Beauty

अनागसो अदितये देवस्य सवितुः सवे ।
विश्वा वामानि धीमहि ॥ ऋ. ५।८२।६

Sinless, for noble power under the influence of
Savita, God,
May we obtain all things that are beautiful.
(*R.* V. 82-6).

Here the power of goodness is contemplated to lead to the power of beauty.

अदिति, the Primal Divine Power, is taken in the abstract here as in the following description of Agni :

विश्वेषाम् अदितिर् यज्ञियानाम् । ऋ. ४।१।२०

The Divine Power among all adorable Ones.

[Here also there seems to be a word-play on Savita (सविता) and Sava (सव), influence.]

(105)

Source of Truth

आ विश्वदेवं सत्पतिं सूक्तैरद्या वृणीमहे ।
सत्यसवं सवितारम् ॥ ऋ. ५।८२।७

We with our hymns elect to-day the all-God,
Lord of the good,
Savita, whose decrees are true. (*R.* V. 82-7).

The expression 'we elect' (वृणीमहे) implies the willing acceptance of the Divine Power—the Power of goodness and truth. For the word, compare—

विशो न राजानं वृणानाः (ऋ. १०।१२४।८)

As the people elect the King.

[Here also there is the word-play on सव and सविता.]

विश्वदेव—all-God—is an interesting Vedic expression. As the Veda ignores the difference of number, it

addresses "all Gods"—विश्वे देवा: in the same way as it addresses one God as "All-God" (विश्वदेव). This implies that though the Veda speaks of many Gods it does not recognise the real numerical significance of 'many.' The many, i.e., the multiple conceptions of God—are contained in the One. God is One—but is contemplated in many ways. This is a mystical conception peculiar to the Veda.

The three verses quoted above which belong to the same hymn and appear in succession indicate the three principal values or ultimates—Goodness (भद्रम्) Beauty (वामम्) and Truth (सत्यम्). It was many centuries after the Vedas that these values were formulated by the philosophers of Greece. It is notable that the Vedas anticipate them in their characteristic form.

[There are other words too for these three values; e.g. शिव, स्वस्ति for Goodness, श्री, चारुता for Beauty and ऋत for both. The word सुंदरम् for beauty is a later one.]

(106)

The Overseer

यो विश्वाभि विपश्यति

भुवना सं च पश्यति ।

स नः पूषाविता भुवत् ॥ ऋ. ३।६२।९

He who sees all from above and aside,
sees all living things together,
May He, Pushan, be our Saviour. (*R.* III. 62-9).

Here, there is on the one hand the idea of the all-seeing sun, and on the other, that of the omniscient Divinity.

(107)
Inspirer of the Soul

तम् ईशानं जगतस्तस्थुषस् पतिं
धियं जिन्वम् अवसे हूमहे वयम् ।
पूषा नो यथा वेदसामसद् वृधे
रक्षिता पायुरदब्धः स्वस्तये ॥ ऋ. १।८९।५, य (वा) २५।१८.

Him, the supreme Ruler, the Lord of what moves and what stands still,
The Inspirer of the intellect, we invoke for our aid.
May the Deity, our Protector and our Guard,
Who is unassailable, promote the increase of our wealth —for our well-being. (*R*. I. 89-5 ; Y.).

Here the Deity is Pushan.

The qualifying adjectives are, some of them, the same as applied to Savita. स्वस्ति (literally 'what is good' -सु) means spiritual well-being.

(108)
The Noble Lady

आ घा योषेव सूनर्युषा याति प्रभुञ्जती ।
जरयन्ती वृजनं पद्वदीयत उत्पातयति पक्षिणः ॥ ऋ. १।४८।५

Like a noble lady Ushas comes tending everything carefully,
Rousing all life She stirs every footed creature and makes the birds fly. (*R*. I. 48-5).

Note the word, सूनरी a noble or good lady, applied to Ushas. योषा is a young lady.

(109)
The Loving Maiden

जानत्यह्नः प्रथमस्य नाम
शुक्रा कृष्णाद् अजनिष्ट श्वितीची ।
ऋतस्य योषा न मिनाति धामा-
हर् अहर् निष्कृतम् आचरन्ती ॥ ऋ. १।१२३।९

She who has knowledge of the first of days,
is born refulgent white out of darkness ;
The Maiden breaks not the law of Order by coming
day by day to the appointed place (to meet her
lover). (*R.* I. 123-9).

For निष्कृतम् compare—

निष्कृतं जारिणीव । ऋ. १०।३४।५

As the loving girl comes to the appointed place (to meet her lover).

(110)
The Glory of Beauty

कन्येव तन्वा ३ शाशदानाँ
एषि देवि देवम् इयक्षमाणम् ।
संस्मयमाना युवतिः पुरस्ताद्
आविर् वक्षांसि कृणुषे विभाती ॥ ऋ. १।१२३।१०

Like a maiden, in pride of beauty,
Thou goest, Goddess, to meet the God who longs for Thee;
And smiling, youthful, and brightly shining,
Thou discoverest Thy bosom before him.
(*R.* I. 123-10).

(111)
The Blessed Virgin

सुसंकाशा मातृमृष्टेव योषा—
विस् तन्वं कृणुषे दृशे कम् ।
भद्रा त्वम् उषो वितरं व्युच्छ
न तत् ते अन्या उषसो नशन्त ॥ ऋ. १।१२३।११

Lovely as a bride adorned by her mother,
Thou showest Thy beautiful form for all to see ;
Blessed art Thou, Dawn ! Shine more widely.
No other Dawns have attained what Thou attainest.
(*R.* I. 123-11).

The expression मातृमृष्टेव योषा, 'like a bride adorned by her mother'—is most graceful.

(112)
The Blissful Goddess

In the following verse the sense of the glory of light turns to a sense of grace and goodness :

ऋतस्य रश्मिम् अनुयच्छमाना
भद्रंभद्रं क्रतुम् अस्मासु धेहि ।
उषो नो अद्य सुहवा व्युच्छा-
स्मासु रायो मघवत्सु च स्युः ॥ ऋ: १।१२३।१३

Obedient to the reins of Eternal Order,
Give us each thought that is more and more blissful.
Shine on us today, Dawn ! easy to be invoked.
In us and the rulers may Thy bounty lie.
(*R.* I. 123-13).

(113)
Welcome of Songs

"The vision of Dawn creates new types of beautiful poetic imagery, each combining in it ideas of light, loveliness and divine purity.

द्युतद्यामानं बृहतीम् ऋतेन
ऋतावरीम् अरुणप्सुं विभातीम् ।
देवीम् उषसं स्वर् आवहन्तीं
प्रति विप्रासो मतिभिर् जरन्ते ॥ ऋ. ५।८०।१

Bright on her path, sublime, by Law, true to Eternal Order, red-tinted, far-shining ;
Ushas, Goddess, bringer of light :
—Her the poets welcome with the singing of their hymns.
(*R.* V. 80-1).

(114)
Beauty Bright with Bathing

एषा शुभ्रा न तन्वो विदानो-
र्ध्वेव स्नाती दृशये नो अस्थात् ।
अप द्वेषो बाधमाना तमांस्यु-
षा दिवो दुहिता ज्योतिषागात् ॥ ऋ. ५।८०।५

She, as if conscious that her limbs are bright with
bathing, stands, as it were, erect so that we may see her;
Having driven away malignity and darkness,
Ushas, Daughter of the sky, has come with light.
(*R.* V. 80-5).

The first two lines are statuesque. The erect figure of the Goddess of perfect beauty, bright with bathing, stands before our mental vision.

Malignity and darkness are bracketed together and opposed by light. Thus moral ideas are symbolised by the physical.

The verse also clearly implies that what is beautiful. is good, and opposed to evil. This is a fundamental point in Vedic ideology. It combines poetry and religion.

(115)

The Modest Maiden

एषा प्रतीची दुहिता दिवोन्नॄन्
योषेव भद्रा नि रिणीते अप्सः ।
व्यूर्ण्वती दाशुषे वार्याणि
पुनर् ज्योतिर् युवतिः पूर्वथाकः ॥ ऋ. ५।८०।६

She, Daughter of the sky, like a virtuous woman,
bends, opposite to men, her forehead downwards.
Disclosing boons to the worshipper, the Maiden
has brought again the light as before. (*R.* V. 80-6)

Extremely graceful is the description of the gentle downward movement of her head by a vituous woman, when she is face to face with men. The verse refers to the ideal of feminine modesty.

(116)

Like a Dancer

अधि पेशांसि वपते नृतूरिवा-
पोर्णुते वक्ष उस्रेव बर्जहम् ।

ज्योतिर् विश्वस्मै भुवनाय कृण्वती
गावो न व्रजं व्युषा आवर् तमः ॥ ऋ. १।९२।४

She, like a dancer, enrobes herself with her embroidered garments ;
She bares her bosom as the cow her udder.
Creating light for all the world of life,
Ushas has laid open the darkness as cows their stalls.
(*R.* I. 92-4).

(117)

The Goddess advancing amid Ten Arms

इयं या नीच्यर्किणी रूपा रोहिण्या कृता ।
चित्रेव प्रत्यदर्शायत्य १ न्तर् दशसु बाहुषु ॥

ऋ. ८।१०१।१३

She yonder, bending down, rich in rays, clothed in red hues ;
Is seen, advancing as one wonderful, amid the ten surrounding arms. (*R.* VIII. 101-13).

We are reminded by this verse of the ten-armed (दश-भुजा) Goddess worshipped in Bengal and elsewhere. The origin of the Puranic conception of Durga evidently lies in the Veda. In the Veda the 'ten arms' have the original abstract significance of 'ten directions.'

(118)

Like the Mother

उच्छन्ती या कृणोषि मंहना महि
प्रख्यै देवि स्वर् दृशे ।
तस्यास्ते रत्नभाज ईमहे वयं
स्याम मातुर् न सूनवः ॥ ऋ ७।८१।४

Of thee, Goddess, who, dawning, makest with thy glory the earth visible and revealest the heaven for us to see,
Of thee, the distributor of jewels, we pray.
May we be to thee like sons to the mother.
(*R.* VII. 81.4).

The poets who describe the youthful beauty and grace of Ushas wish to be to her like sons to the mother. Thus they not only invest the charm of womanhood with divine holiness, but also bring the devotion of sons investing her with maternal glory and grace.

This passage provides an ancient instance of the worship of the Divine Virgin as Mother.

(119)

Dawn in Days to come

ईयुष्टे ये पूर्वतराम् अपश्यन्
व्युच्छन्तीम् उषसं मर्त्यासः ।
अस्माभिरू नु प्रतिचक्ष्याभूदो
ते यन्ति ये अपरीषु पश्यान् ॥ ऋ. १।११३।११

Gone are those mortals who beheld the beaming
Dawn in former ages,
We now behold her brightness,
and they are coming who will see her in after-ages.
(*R.* I. 113-11).

Here the response to the glory of Dawn unites the past, present and future generations of men.

(120)

The All-pervading Being

हंसः शुचिषद् वसुरन्तरिक्षसद्-
धोता वेदिषद् अतिथिर् दुरोणसत् ।
नृषद् वरसद् ऋतसद् व्योमसद्
अब्जा गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतम् ॥ ऋ. ४।४०।५
य (वा.) १०।२४, १२।१४

He is the Swan seated in the midst of light ;
the Lord of wealth seated in the mid-region ;
the Priest seated by the altar, the Guest seated at the house ;
The Dweller among men, the Dweller in the noblest place,
the Dweller in Eternal Law, the Dweller in the

infinite sky; born of water, born of light, born of Eternal Law, born of the mountain, He is the Eternal Law. (*R.* IV. 40.5; *Y.* 10. 24, 12. 14).

The Deity in this verse is Surya (सूर्य).

The beginning of the verse may suggest a material phenomenon, the sun surrounded by bright light. But soon it becomes apparent that the swan (हँस) is a symbolic term, signifying the Ultimate Being; and the idea expressed is that of the supremacy and all-pervasiveness of the Divinity. He is in the light of the heavens and of the mid-region; He is at the altar on the earth; He is the honoured Guest in the homes of men. He is in men, in the best of places, in the infinite sky: He is within water, within the mountain. Finally the idea goes from the concrete to the abstract: He is in Eternal Law: He is the Eternal Law.

This association of the concrete and the abstract, the material and the spiritual, is typical of Vedic poetry and belongs to the religious outlook described as विभूति-योग, the Path of Splendour.

[It will be found here how wrong it is of those who say that the Vedas worship natural objects like the sun. When the sun is described as "born of Eternal Law" and "Eternal Law," no doubt is left as to the meaning that is finally attached to the conception of the Deity. Here neither 'the sun' nor, for that matter, 'the swan, (हंस),' is to be taken literally. The ideas are symbolical, and signify the Ultimate Reality.]

The verse is quoted in *Katha Upanishad* (V. 1) to describe the supreme qualities of Atman.

(121)

Light is God, God is light

अग्निर् ज्योतिर् ज्योतिर् अग्निर्
इन्द्रो ज्योतिर् ज्योतिर् इन्द्रः ।
सूर्यो ज्योतिर् ज्योतिः सूर्यः ॥

सा. १८३१

Agni is light, the light is Agni;
Indra is light, the light is Indra;
Surya is light, the light is Surya. (S. 1831).

The word light (ज्योतिः) is reiterated in an ecstatic manner through the musical accents of the *Samaveda.* ज्योतिः symbolises eternity, divinity, *e.g.*

तमसो मा ज्योतिर् गमय (बृह. उ. १.३.२८)

Lead me from darkness to light. (*Br. Up.* 1. 3. 28).

(122)

The Wonderful One

स चित्र चित्रं चितयन्तम् अस्मे
चित्रक्षत्र चित्रतमं वयोधाम्।
चन्द्रं रयिं पुरुवीरं बृहन्तं
चन्द्र चन्द्राभिर् गृणते युवस्व ॥ ऋ. ६।६।७

O wondrous One, of wondrous power!
O Lord of wonders! give us what is most wonderful, life-giving;
O Bright One! with Thy brightness, give to Thy singer great wealth, brilliant, with many heroes.
(R. VI. 6.7).

[The Deity is Agni.] Here Divine effulgence and its wonder are contemplated with a poetic thrill.

(123)

The Supreme Light

ध्रुवं ज्योतिर् निहितं दृशये कं
मनो जविष्ठं पतयत्स्वन्तः।
विश्वे देवाः समनसः सकेता
एकं क्रतुम् अभि वि यन्ति साधु ॥ ऋ. ६।९।५

A steady Light, swifter than thought, is stationed among moving things to show the way;
All the Shining Ones, being of one mind and like wisdom proceed reverently towards the One Intelligence.
(R. VI. 9-5).

Here the Divine Presence is understood in terms of light and intelligence. [The Deity is *Vaishwanara Agni.*] Powers cosmic and mental, move towards it. It is steady (ध्रुव) in the midst of moving things (पतयत्सु).

क्रतु implies the second of the three aspects of the Divinity, सच्चिदानन्द; it is synonymous with चित्.

(124)
He Lights up Darkness

अयं रोचयद् अरुचो रुचानो ३
ऽयं वासयद् व्यृ१ तेन पूर्वीः ॥
अयम् ईयत ऋतयुग्भिर् अश्वैः
स्वर्विदा नाभिना चर्षणिप्राः ॥ ऋ. ६।३९।४

He, shining, caused to shine what shone not.
By Law he lighted up the dawns.
He moves with steeds yoked by eternal order,
Making men happy by the chariot-nave that finds the light. (*R.* VI. 39-4).

[The Deity is Indra]

God is Light and Law.

(125)
The Ageless

न यं जरन्ति शरदो न मासा
न द्याव इन्द्रम् अवकर्शयन्ति ।
वृद्धस्य चिद् वर्धताम् अस्य तनूः
स्तोमेभिर् उक्थैश्च शस्यमाना ॥ ऋ. ६।२४।७

Years do not age Him; nor months nor days wear out Indra;
May His self grow, though ever so mighty,
glorified by songs of praise and hymns of prayer.
(*R.* VI. 24-7).

The sense of the first part of the verse is the same as expressed by the words "अजर" (ageless) and "युवा"

(youthful), but it is expressed in the particularised manner characteristic of poetry. The worshipper thinks his songs of praise will increase the greatness of God :—an idea typical of the attitude of *bhakti*.

(126)
The Bright One

यद् द्याव इन्द्र ते शतं
शत भूमीर् उत स्युः।
न त्वा वज्रिन् त्सहस्रं सूर्या अनु
न जातमष्ट रोदसी ॥ ऋ. ८।७०।५,
साम. २७८, ८६२; अ. २०।८१।१, ९२।२०

If Indra ! a hundred heavens were Thine,
and even a hundred earths,—
No, not even a thousand suns, O Thunderer,
could match Thee, manifested, nor both the worlds
(*R.* VIII. 70-5; *S.* 278, 862; also *A.*).

[The Deity is Indra].

Here Divine glory is described. Compare the *Bhagavad Gita* :

दिवि सूर्यसहस्रस्य भवेद् युगपदुत्थिता ।
यदि भाः सदृशी सा स्याद् भासस्तस्य महात्मनः ॥ भ. गी. ११।१२

If there could be the splendour of a thousand
suns arisen at once in the sky,
Such would be the glory of that Magnificent Being.
(*Ch.* 11.12).

(127)
The Form Behind All Forms

रूपं रूपं प्रतिरूपो बभूव
तद् अस्य रूपं प्रतिचक्षणाय ।
इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूप ईयते
युक्ता ह्यस्य हरयः शता दश ॥
ऋ. ६।४७।१८

For every form He has been the Model,
that form of His is the one to look on everywhere;
Indra by His maya (creative illusion) moves in many forms;
verily, His bay steeds are yoked a thousand times.
(*R.* VI. 47-18).

God is one, His glory multiplying in many forms. 'Bay steeds' is a poetic way of expressing his splendour.

The following is Shankaracharya's commentary on this mantra (which he read as part of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*) : "Why did He come in so many forms? Were name and form not manifested, the transcendent nature of Atman as pure intelligence would not have been known."

(Com. on *Br. Up.* 2. 5. 19)

(128)

His Manifold Splendour

ब्रह्मा देवानां पदवीः कवीनाम्
ऋषिर्विप्राणां महिषो मृगाणाम्
श्येनो गृध्राणां स्वधितिर्वनानां
सोमः पवित्रम् अत्येति रेभन् ॥ ऋ. ९।९६।६, सा. ९४४

Brahma among Gods, the Leader of poets,
The Sage among the wise, the Buffalo among wild animals,
the Falcon amid vultures, the Svadhiti tree in the forest—
Soma over the cleansing sieve goes singing.
(*R.* IX. 96-6; *S.*)

[The Deity is Soma Pavamana, identified with the Supreme Being, to whom the libation of soma juice is made. Here the word for libation implies the Deity. (Similarly Agni, fire in ritual, and ब्रह्मन्, word of prayer, are names of the Deity).]

This style of expression has been made popular by the *Bhagavad Gita* in its interpretation of Vibhuti-yoga. For example, to Arjuna's question—

केषु केषु च भावेषु चिन्त्योऽसि भगवन् मया (१०।१७)

'In what aspects, O Lord! art Thou to be contemplated by me?' Lord Krishna speaks of the divine splendour (विभूति) in a style which reminds one of the Rigvedic verse quoted above :—

आदित्यानाम् अहं विष्णुर्ज्योतिषां रविरंशुमान् ।
मरीचिर् मरुताम् अस्मि नक्षत्राणाम् अहं शशी ॥ भ. गी. १०।२१

I am Vishnu among Adityas, the glorious sun among radiances ;
Marichi of the Maruts ; the moon among asterisms.

The following is in the same strain.

(129)

Splendour among Splendid Things

अहं मनुरभवं सूर्यश्चा—
हं कक्षीवाँ ऋषिरस्मि विप्रः ।
अहं कुत्सम् आर्जुनेयं न्यृञ्जे
ऽहं कविर् उशना पश्यता मा ॥ ऋ. ४।२६।१

I became Manu and Surya ;
I am the sage Kakshivan, the holy singer !
Kutsa, son of Arjuni, I master ;
I am the poet Ushana. Behold me! (*R.* IV. 26-1).

The Deity is Indra : the verse is given as a Divine utterance.

Compare *Bhagavad Gita* :

कवीनाम् उशना कविः (१०।३७)

Of poets I am Ushana, the bard.

Here the Gita quotes the Veda.

(130)

The Mighty One

इदं नमो वृषभाय स्वराजे
सत्यशुष्माय तवसेऽवाचि ।

अस्मिन्निन्द्र वृजने सर्ववीराः

स्मत् सूरिभिस्तव शर्मन्त्स्याम ॥ ऋ. १।५१।१५

This obeisance is spoken for the Mighty One, the self-resplendent, for Him whose power is truth, for the strong One ;
In this battle, O God ! may all the heroes, with the princes, be under Thy protection.
(*R.* I. 51-15).

[The Deity is Indra]

[Here Indra is described as *Vrishabha,* the Mighty One. In later religious literature the word was taken in the non-metaphorical way, meaning the bull, and the bull came to occupy a place of worship. In the South *Vasava*, Prakrit for *Vrishabha,* is the Bull-God. Compare with *Vrishabha* (वृषभ). literally, a bull, the description of the Deity as *Mesha* (मेष) in Rig I. 5.15 which is used in the abstract sense to imply power, not in the concrete sense of 'a ram.'

Similarly in the following verse, the Deity has been called a 'varaha' (वराह) literally, 'wild boar.'

दिवो वराहम् अरुषं कपर्दिनं

त्वेषं रूपं नमसा नि ह्वयामहे । ऋ. १।११४।५

We invoke with our obeisance the Mighty One of the sky, red, with conch-like hair, the beautiful form.
(*R.* I. 114-5).

Perhaps this is at the root of the conception of the Divine incarnation of *Varaha* (the boar). But the Veda uses the term in the abstract to mean the fury of Rudra suggested by a violent storm.]

(131)

God's Many Aspects

मन्ये त्वा यज्ञियं यज्ञियानां

मन्ये त्वा च्यवनम् अच्युतानाम् ।

मन्ये त्वा सत्वनाम् इन्द्र केतुं
मन्ये त्वा वृषभं चर्षणीनाम् ॥

ऋ. ८।९६।४

I deem Thee as the Holiest of the holy,
I deem Thee as the Shaker of the unshaken ;
I deem Thee, O God ! as the Banner of heroes,
I deem Thee as the Chief of the people.
(*R.* VIII. 96-4).

[The Deity is Indra]

Here the holiness, power, valour and supremacy of God are described in highly poetic language. The repeated, "I deem Thee" (मन्ये त्वा) creates a fine oratorical effect.

(132)

The Model of the World

यस्मान्न ऋते विजयन्ते जनासो
यं युध्यमाना अवसे हवन्ते
यो विश्वस्य प्रतिमानं बभूव
यो अच्युतच्युत् स जनास इन्द्रः ॥

ऋ. २।१२।९, अ. २०।३४।९

He, without whom men never conquer,
Whom, while fighting in battle, they invoke for succour :
He, who is the Model of all this world,
Who is the Shaker of the unshaken, He, O men, is Indra.
(*R.* II. 12-9; *A.*)

Here the central principle of Vibhuti-Yoga is stated :

यो विश्वस्य प्रतिमानं बभूव–

that the universe reflects divine splendour. (The Deity is Indra). Cf. Mundakopanishad (Also *Katha*, V. 15) :

तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं
तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति । मुंडक. २।२।१०

All shine by His shining,
And by His splendour all the world is splendid.
(II. 2-10).

(133)

The Dancer

श्रिये ते पादा दुव आ मिमिक्षुर्
धृष्णुर् वज्री शवसा दक्षिणावान् ।
वसानो अत्कं सुरभिं दृशे कं
स्व१र्ण नृतविषिरो बभूथ ॥ ऋ. ६।२९।३

For glory Thy devotees embrace Thy feet.
Bold, thunder-armed, gracious through Thy might,
Clad in a vesture, beautiful as heaven to look on,
Thou hast been as an active dancer. (*R.* VI. 29-3).

The word Shri (श्री) has carried a sense of divine glory and bliss through thousands of years.

Here God (Indra) is called a Dancer. Dancing, the beauty of movement—the rhythm of life, is attributed to the Divine.

In later times, the figure of dancing Shiva has been much admired. The different sects took the Vedic ideas, particularly those associated with Indra. In the verse quoted above, we have the origin of the idea of the Divinity as Dancer. Also compare :

यः पूर्व्याम् अनुष्टुतिम् ईशे कृष्टीनां नृतुः ॥ ऋ. ८।६८।७

Who was Lord of ancient praise-song, of tribes of men, the Dancer.

Also cf. Rig. II. 22.4, VIII. 92.3.

In Rig. I. 92.4, Ushas has been described as नृतु:—dancer; so have Asvins in Rig. VI. 63.5.

(134)

Bringer of Lovely Water

प्राग्रुवो नभन्वो३न वक्वा
ध्वस्रा अपिन्वद् युवतीर् ऋतज्ञाः ।
धन्वान्यज्रा अपृणक् तृषाणाँ
अधोग् इन्द्रः स्तर्यो३ दंसुपत्नीः ॥ ऋ. ४।१९।७

Indra let the unwedded young virgins skilled in Law,
as fountains, bubbling, flow streaming forward.
He flooded with water the desert and thirsty plains,
and milked the dry cows that had a mighty master.
(*R*. IV. 19-7).

The divine action described here refers to the glory of the breaking of rains after summer. 'The unwedded young virgins' referring to streamlets, is a graceful metaphor. Here we find the initial stage of the poetic analogy which in later times developed into the mythology of water-nymphs through a detailed allegory. The law (ऋत) is the Law of Universal Order; here the law of nature. 'Milking the cows' implies the streaming of water from clouds. The mighty master is Vritra, the enemy of light, of goodness, of order, who prevented the working of the Law and the breaking of rains. The Deity is Indra.

(135)

The Source of Beauty

यः पुष्पिणीश्च प्रस्वश्च धर्मणा
ऽधि दाने व्य१वनीरधारयः ।
यश्चासमा अजनो दिद्युतो दिव
उरुरूर्वां अभितः सास्युक्थ्यः ॥ ऋ. २।१३।७

Thou who by Eternal Law hast spread about
flowering and seed-bearing plants, and streams of water;
Thou who hast generated the matchless lightnings in the sky,—
Thou, vast, encompassing vast realms, art a fit subject for our song.
(*R*. II. 13-7).

The word धर्मन् is cognate with "dharma" (धर्म) which has been widely used in Indian religious literature. It is Eternal Law. It is an attribute of God that He maintains Eternal Law. He does not exercise a whimsical or arbitrary will.

The Eternal Law (धर्म) manifests itself in nature, making its beauty and glory. In its application to life, धर्म or Eternal Law makes virtuous conduct—goodness. Hence the beautiful and the good are but two aspects of धर्म— Law, cosmic and moral. Cosmic lawlessness is chaos, and moral lawlessness evil.

[The Deity is Indra]

(136)

The Revelation

प्र सु स्तोमं भरत वाजयन्त
इन्द्राय सत्यं यदि सत्यमस्ति ।
नेन्द्रो अस्तीति नेम उ त्व आह
क ईं ददर्श कम् अभि ष्टवाम ॥ ३ ॥
अयम् अस्मि जरितः पश्य मेह
विश्वा जातान्यभ्यस्मि मह्ना ।
ऋतस्य मा प्रदिशो वर्धयन्त्या-
दर्दिरो भुवना दर्दरीमि ॥ ४ ॥ ऋ. ८।१००

"Desiring strength, bring forward a hymn of praise,
a truthful hymn to Indra, if, truly, He exists ;"
"There is no Indra," some have said,
"who has seen Him ? Whom, then, shall we adore ?"
"I exist, O singer ! look upon Me here ;
all that exists I surpass in splendour.
The Eternal Law's commandments make me mighty ;
when I rend, I rend asunder the world."
(*R.* VIII. 100. 3-4).

The Divinity manifests Itself through splendour and through Law. This revelation is different from the revelations described in later religions, according to which some physical body appears before a man. Here the singer does not see a person or perceive a physical object ; he realises within him that he can see God where he stands—through His splendour, as manifested in the universe, and through His Law which works in nature and life.

The sage's realisation implies that 'God is here or nowhere.'

'Rending' implies the might of Divine Law.

Mark the spirit of scepticism preceding the mastery of truth. It is only in very highly refined society that the spirit of doubt and query plays an important part in life. There people are not led by blind faith.

'If, truly, Indra exists'—indicates a robust mind refusing to accept an idea without personal realisation.

'Who has seen Him?' (क ईं ददर्श) implies that nobody has seen Him with eyes. 'Look upon me here' (पश्य मेह) indicates that a different kind of 'seeing' is meant—the seeing with the spirit,—the spiritual vision.

नेन्द्रो अस्ति—Indra does not exist—means not that a particular deity called Indra does not exist, but that God does not exist. Had Indra meant a particular deity, then the worshipper would have rejected Indra for some other Deity—say, Agni or Varuna or Savita—as it is done in polytheism. But it is clearly meant here that the non-existence of Indra is not the non-existence of one of many deities, but of Divinity Itself. It is evident, therefore, that Indra is one of the many names of the Divinity and not the name of a particular deity. Similarly, when the sage says to Indra—न त्वावाँ अन्यो अमृत त्वदस्ति (ऋ. ६।२१।१०) 'There is no one like You beside Yourself, O Immortal!' he refers not to a particular deity, but to God. This implies very clearly that the Vedic religion is not polytheistic. It contemplates One God.

(137)

The Awful

The following verse represents God the awful:

द्यावा चिद् अस्मै पृथिवी नमेते
शुष्माच्चिदस्य पर्वता भयन्ते ।

यः सोमपा निचितो वज्रबाहुर्
यो वज्रहस्तः स जनास इन्द्रः ॥
ऋ. २।१२।१३, अ. २०।३४।१४

Heaven and earth bow before Him,
before His might the mountains tremble;
He, armed with the thunder-bolt, deemed by us
as the Receiver of the Soma libation,
He, the thunder-wielder—O men, is Indra.
(*R.* II. 12-13; *A.*).

(138)

The Creator of Beautiful Forms

यो धर्ता भुवनानां
य उस्राणाम् अपीच्या ३ वेद नामानि गुह्या ।
स कविः काव्या पुरु रूपं द्यौरिव पुष्यति ॥ ऋ. ८।४१।५

He who is the Supporter of the world of life,
Who knows the secret, mysterious names of the
morning beams,
He, Poet, cherishes manifold forms by His poetic power,
even as heaven. (*R.* VIII. 41-5).

The verse is followed by a refrain used elsewhere too :

नमन्ताम् अन्यके समे
(May all others vanish)
[The Deity is Varuna]

One of the divine attributes is to know the light (hence the term स्वर्विद् is applied to the Divine) which represents the principle of knowledge, goodness, beauty, order, etc. Here the symbolic nature of light is indicated by the expression 'secret mysterious names of beams of light.'

The description of God as a Poet (कवि) and His creative energy as poetic power (काव्य) is typically Vedic and indicates the poetic approach to the Divine. Manifold form (पुरुरूप) indicates the forms of beauty and splendour. द्यौरिव—like the heaven or sky—seems to refer to the changes in the colour and form of clouds in the sky.

(139)
The Protector

अपश्यं गोपाम् अनिपद्यमानम्
आ च परा च पथिभिः चरन्तम्
स सध्रीचीः स विसूचीर् वसान
आ वरीवर्ति भुवनेष्वन्तः ॥ ऋ. १।१६४।३१ ; १०।१७७।३
य. ३७।१७ ; अ. ९।१०।११

I saw the Protector, who never rests, who moves forward and backward over the earth,
He, wearing splendour that gathers together and spreads out, travels constantly within the worlds.
(*R.* I. 164.31; *X.* 177.3; *Y.*, A.)

The Deity is "Mayabheda," "the seeing through maya or creation"—the vision of the Divinity in creation. The physical idea suggested by the 'Protector' is that of the sun. But the tone of the verse is mystical. It refers to the Light of Lights beyond darkness.

The term गोपा (Protector) came to be identified with गोप (Herdsman). The Divine Krishna was a गोप, corresponding to the Vedic 'Gopā' गोपा.

(140)
Worshipped in All Ages

इद् आ हि ते वेविषतः पुराजाः
प्रत्नास आसुः पुरुकृत् सखायः ।
ये मध्यमास उत नूतनास
उतावमस्य पुरुहूत बोधि ॥ ऋ. ६।२१।५

Yea, here have been those worshipping Thee, who were born in old times,
Thy ancient friends, O active Achiever of many deeds,
And Thy friends of the middle ages and of modern times.
Bethink Thee now, O invoked of many, of the youngest (friend). (*R.* VI. 21.5).

The terms प्रत्न, मध्यम, and नूतन exactly correspond to 'ancient,' 'medieval' and 'modern.'

[The Deity is Indra]

(141)

The Guardian of Eternal Law

The idea of the Protector is found in another conception of the Divinity.

त्रीणि पदा वि चक्रमे
विष्णुर् गोपा अदाभ्यः ।
अतो धर्माणि धारयन् ॥ ऋ. १।२२।१८, सा. १६७०
य. (वा) ३४।४३, अ. ७।२६।५

He made three steps—
Vishnu, the Protector, the undeceivable,
Upholding, thenceforth, the eternal statutes.

(*R.* I. 22-18; *S.*, *Y.* *A.*)

गोपा, Protector, means the Guardian of the universe. God upholds 'the eternal statutes' (धर्मन्). The conception of Divinity includes the fundamental principle of eternal law, moral and cosmic, or Rita (ऋत), Eternal Order. According to the Veda, God is God because He upholds the Eternal Law. This implies two things: first, we cannot imagine a God whose will is arbitrary and who can do good or evil according to His whim: secondly, it is possible to adhere to *dharma*, Eternal Law, without even attaching oneself to the divine idea. [The latter view was advocated by Lord Buddha. It is no wonder, firstly, that people worshipping Vishnu should be persuaded to attach themselves to *dharma* and not think of the Deity,—in other words to become Buddhists; and secondly, that people who were attached to Dharma alone (Buddhists) should come to accept the Divinity too and become Vaishnavas and followers of the Vedic religion. The transition, therefore, from the Vedic religion to Buddhism first, and later from Buddhism back to the Vedic religion was a simple process; because the Vedic conception included both the Divine idea and the idea of *dharma*.]

(142)

Source of Sweetness

यस्य त्री पूर्णा मधुना पदा—
न्यक्षीयमाणा स्वधया मदन्ति ।
य उ त्रिधातु पृथिवीम् उत द्याम्
एको दाधार भुवनानि विश्वा ॥ १।१५४।४

[Let the hymn lift itself to]
Vishnu whose three places are filled with sweetness,
Imperishable places that joy with holy bliss;
Vishnu the One, who upholds the three-fold—the earth,
the sky and the worlds of living creatures.
(*R.* I. 154-4).

The ideas of sweetness, peace and joy have been associated with the conception of the Divinity as Vishnu in later religious literature. The Vaishnava cult distinguishes itself by the contemplation of these qualities.

When every God is described as "the One" in the Veda, it is clear that different divinities are but different aspects of the One Divine Being.

(143)

King and President

विशां राजानम् अद्भुतम्
अध्यक्षं धर्मणाम् इमम् ।
अग्निम् ईळे स उ श्रवत् ॥ ऋ. ८।४३।२४

To the King of men, the wonderful,
the President of Eternal Laws,
to the Effulgent One, I pray; may He listen to me.
(*R.* VIII. 43-24).

Here the Deity is described both as King and as President, implying respectively the Monarch and the Presiding or Overseeing Power (अध्यक्ष).

(144)

The King

महाँ असि महिष वृष्ण्येभिर्
धनस्पृद् उग्र सहमानो अन्यान् ।
एको विश्वस्य भुवनस्य राजा
स योधया च क्षयया च जनान् ॥ ऋ. ३।४६।२

Great art Thou, Mighty Lord, through valour
obtaining wealth, O fierce One, conquering others.
Thyself alone the King of the whole universe,
Thou causest battle and peace among men.
(*R.* III. 46-2).

Here the Deity Indra is conceived on the analogy of the martial earthly monarch. Compare also—

य एको अस्ति दंसना
महाँ उग्रो अभि व्रतैः ऋ. ८।१।२७

He who alone by his splendours is mighty, who
is awful by eternal laws.

Compare also—

वरिवस्य महामह— ऋ. ८।४६।१०

Be gracious, O Greatest of the great!

(145)

The Emperor

अग्निः प्रियेषु धामसु
कामो भूतस्य भव्यस्य
सम्राडेको विराजति ॥ साम. १७१० ; अ, ६।३६।३

Agni in His beloved forms,
Lover of what has been and what will be,
Shines, the sole Emperor. (*S.* 1710 ; *A.*).

Here the Deity is described as the Emperor, an idea frequently found in Semitic religions.

(146)

All Power is His

उत् त्वं मघवञ् छृणु
यस्ते वष्टि ववक्षि तत् ।
यद् वीळयासि वीळु तत् ॥ ऋ. ८।४५।६

And, O mighty Lord, hear!
Thou givest to him who asks of Thee:
Whatever Thou makest firm is firm. (*R.* VIII. 45-6).

[The Deity is Indra]. Here the idea is about the same as is found in Semitic religions of an all-powerful God whose will makes men what they are and who, out of His grace, gives to those who ask.

(147)

The Terrible Chastiser

The following idea of a Terrible Chastiser is also in keeping with the Semitic conception of God:

विभया हि त्वावत
उग्राद् अभिप्रभङ्गिणः ।
दस्माद् अहम् ऋतीषहः ॥ ऋ. ८।४५।३५

I am afraid of One like Thee,
the mighty Crusher (of the wicked),
the powerful, the Conqueror of all.
(*R.* VIII. 45-35).

[The Deity is Indra]

The following is a homage to Rudra, God of death, who is also God of well-being:

नमः शङ्गवे च पशुपतये च
नम उग्राय च भीमाय च ।

Homage to Him who leads to well-being,
to Pashupati, Lord of creatures,
Homage to the fierce, the terrible.

(*Y.* 13.40).

(148)

The Forgiver of Sins

मा न एकस्मिन्नागसि
मा द्वयोर् उत त्रिषु ।
वधीर् मा शूर भूरिषु ॥ ऋ. ८।४५।३४

Not for one sin nor for two, nor three,
O Hero! destroy me! nor yet for many sins.
(*R*. VIII. 45-34).

[The Deity is Indra]

The prayer for the forgiveness of sins is typical of later forms of religion. The typical Vedic spirit is to approach the All-good through goodness, the All-powerful through power, the All-pure through purity.

(149)

God's Emissaries

The idea of sin is particularly associated with the conception of Varuna whose emissaries detect all the trespasses of man :

परि स्पशो वरुणस्य स्मदिष्टा
उभे पश्यन्ति रोदसी सुमेके ।
ऋतावानः कवयो यज्ञधीराः
प्रचेतसो य इषयन्त मन्म ॥ ऋ. ७।८७।३

The emissaries of Varuna, sent on their errand,
survey both the worlds, that are well-formed ;
Upholders of Eternal Law, wise, holy,—
they further the praise-songs of the noble-minded.
(*R*. VII. 87-3).

(150)

Creator of Splendid Things

वनेषु व्य १ न्तरिक्षं ततान
वाजम् अर्वत्सु पय उस्रियासु

हृत्सु क्रतुं वरुणो अप्स्व १ ग्निं
दिवि सूर्यम् अदधात् सोममद्रौ ॥ ऋ. ५।८५।२,
य (वा) ४।३१

Varuna has spread the vista in forests,
put vigour in horses, milk in kine ;
Set wise instincts in hearts, fire in the waters,
the sun in heaven and Soma on the mountain.
(*R.* V. 85-2; *Y.*).

Here both the physical aspects of the universe and the mind of man are referred to.

[The first line has been translated after Sayana as—"Varuna has extended the air in tree-tops," which does not appear satisfactory. अन्तरिक्ष, like 'vigour in horses, milk in kine' etc., is something within the forests (वनेषु)].

(151)

The Brightener of Minds

महो अर्णः सरस्वती
प्र चेतयति केतुना ।
धियो विश्वा वि राजति ॥ ऋ. १।३।१२. य. (वा) २०।८६

Saraswati, the mighty ocean (of light).
illumines with her light :
She brightens all intellects. (*R.* I. 3-12; Y.)

Sarasvati is the Deity conceived as the inspirer of thought and knowledge. Light is the usual Vedic symbol for knowledge. In many verses धी (intelligence) is associated with Sarasvati.

शं सरस्वती सह धीभिरस्तु ॥ ऋ. ७।३५।११, अ.१९।११।२

May Saraswati, with intellectual power, be gracious.

For **अर्णः** ocean, compare :

त्वम् समुद्रो असि । ऋ. ९।८६।२९

Thou art the sea (vast) (*R.* IX. 86.29).

(This is addressed to Soma). No. 173.

(152)

The Inspirer

प्र णो देवी सरस्वती
वाजेभिर् वाजिनीवती ।
धीनाम् अवित्र्यवतु ॥ ऋ. ६।६१।४

May the divine Sarasvati,
rich in her wealth,
Preserver of intellectual powers, protect us well.
(*R.* VI. 61·4).

(153)

The Purifier

पावका नः सरस्वती
वाजेभिर् वाजिनीवती ।
यज्ञं वष्टु धियावसुः ॥ ऋ. १।३।१०, सा. १८९,
य. (वा) २०।८४

May Sarasvati, the purifier,
rich in her wealth,
with intellect as her treasure,
Desire our sacrifice. (*R.* I. 3 10; *S.*, *Y.*)

Though Sarasvati is considered to be the bestower of treasure, intellectual treasure is her special gift.

(154)

Rouser of the True and the Good

चोदयित्री सूनृतानां
चेतन्ती सुमतीनाम् ।
यज्ञं दधे सरस्वती ॥ ऋ. १।३।११, य. (वा) २०।८५

Inspirer of the truthful,
rouser of the good-minded,
May Sarasvati accept our offering. (*R.* I. 3·11; *Y.*).

The spiritual inspiration comes only to the true and good. One who seeks higher knowledge must live a noble life.

(155)

Giver of Renown

The etymological sense of the word 'Sarasvati' is 'Lady of the lake' (सरस्+वती). The idea of a stream often goes with the conception of the Deity, though the association with the higher life of intellect remains unchanged :

अम्बितमे नदीतमे
देवितमे सरस्वति ।
अप्रशस्ता इव स्मसि
प्रशस्तिम् अम्ब नस्कृधि ॥ ऋ. २।४१।१६

Motherliest of mothers, noblest of rivers,
Godliest of Goddesses! O Sarasvati,
we are as of no repute;
Mother, give us high renown. (*R.* II. 41-16).

Though it is a prayer to the noblest of rivers, it is a prayer for intellectual achievement,—high renown. Some take "rivers" to mean "rivers of light." (Cf. 151 above).

(156)

The Mighty Mother ..

महीम् ऊ षु मातरं सुव्रतानाम्
ऋतस्य पत्नीम् अवसे हुवेम ।
तुविक्षत्राम् अजरन्तीम् उरूचीं
सुशर्माणम् अदितिं सुप्रणीतिम् ॥ य. २१।५

The Mighty Mother of those whose sway is just,
the Queen of Order,—we call on for our help;
We call on the powerful Ruler, the never-decaying,
the wide-expanding.
Aditi—the good Protectress, the gracious Guide.
(Y. 21-5).

[The Deity is Aditi].

The expression, 'Mighty Mother,' carries the idea of the supreme Divinity in terms of motherhood. (This idea has been popularised in later times by Tantra.)

Cf. the *Rigveda* :

प्रति मे स्तोमम् अदितिर् जगृभ्यात्

सूनुं न माता हृद्यं सुशेवम् । ऋ. ५।४२।२

May Aditi my praise-song accept,
as a mother her dear heart-gladdening son.
(*R.* V. 42-2).

(157)

Motherliest Physicians

ओमानम् आपो मानुषीर् अमृक्तं

धात तोकाय तनयाय शं योः ।

यूयं हि ष्ठा भिषजो मातृतमा

विश्वस्य स्थातुर् जगतो जनित्रीः ॥ ऋ. ६।५०।७

Waters ! Friends of men ! in peace and in trouble
give your blessings to our sons and grandsons ;
For you are the most motherly physicians,
the Mothers of all that stands and all that moves.
(*R.* VI. 50-7).

The physical idea behind the prayer is that water has great curative power.

(158)

Healing Power of Water

The medicative powers of water that were known to Vedic Aryans have only recently been discovered by modern people.

अप्सु मे सोमो अब्रवीद्

अन्तर्विश्वानि भेषजा ।

अग्निं च विश्वशंभुवम्

आपश्च विश्वभेषजीः ॥ १।२३।२० ; अ. १।६।२

Within the waters—Soma has told me—
are all medicines that heal,
And Agni, who blesses all.
The waters contain all medicines. (*R.* I. 23-20; *A.*)

Only in recent times the importance of hydropathy has been recognised.

(159)
The Divine Pair

प्रातर् यावाणा रथ्येव वीरा
ऽजेव यमा वरमा सचेथे ।
मेने इव तन्वा ३ शुम्भमाने
दम्पतीव क्रतुविदा जनेषु ॥२

शृङ्गेव नः प्रथमा गन्तम् अर्वाक्
छफाविव जर्भुराणा तरोभिः ।
चक्रवाकेव प्रति वस्तोर् उस्रा
ऽर्वाञ्चा यातं रथ्येव शक्रा ॥३

नावेव नः पारयतं युगेव
नभ्येव न उपधीव प्रधीव ।
श्वानेव नो अरिषण्या तनूनां
खृगलेव विस्रसः पातम् अस्मान् ॥४

वातेवाजुर्या नद्येव रीतिर्-
अक्षी इव चक्षुषा यातम् अर्वाक् ।
हस्ताविव तन्वे३ शंभविष्ठा
पादेव नो नयतं वस्यो अच्छ ॥५

ओष्ठाविव मध्वास्ने वदन्ता
स्तनाविव पिप्यतं जीवसे नः ।
नासेव नस्तन्वो रक्षितारा
कर्णाविव सुश्रुता भूतमस्मे ॥६

हस्तेव शक्तिम् अभि संददी नः
क्षामेव नः समजतं रजांसि ।
इमा गिरो अश्विना युष्मयन्तीः
क्ष्णोत्रेणेव स्वधितिं सं शिशीतम् ॥७॥ ऋ. २।३९

Going in the morning, like two car-borne heroes, (1)
like a pair of goats, ye come electing;
Like two damsels embellishing their bodies,
like a wise married couple among the people. (2)
Like a pair of horns, come first towards us,
like a pair of hoofs with rapid motion;
Like two chakravaks, come in the early morning,
come, ye mighty! like two chariot wheels at dawn. (3)
Like two boats, take us across (the river),
like the naves, like the yokes, like spokes and fellies,
save us;
Like two dogs that injure not the body,
like two crutches protect us against falling. (4)
Like two winds that never grow old,
like two rivers that have come to a confluence,
Like two eyes, come quick before us, with the power of
vision:
Come like two hands, most helpful to the body,
like two feet take us towards what is good. (5)
Like two lips that with the mouth speak honey,
like two breasts that nourish our life,
Like two nostrils that preserve our body,
be to us, like two ears that hear well. (6)
Like two hands, give us active strength,
like heaven and earth, enclose the airy region;
These hymns, O Ashvins! that go towards you,
sharpen ye, like an axe upon a whetstone.' (7)
(*R.* II. 39).

If such splendid poetry can be written in the number two, (the Deity is Aśvins), then many who are sensitive to the appeal of poetry, will like to think of the Divinity as two, instead of as one! Beautiful images of life spring into view as one proceeds from line to line. The material under observation is simple, but the soul of the sage-poet that viewed it is noble and has been thrilled by the finest inspiration.

The 'chakravaks' have persisted through thousands of years as a poetic analogy for an ideal pair. This is perhaps the first use of the simile. (See under No. 235)

The reference to 'two dogs' indicates that these animals were better treated in Vedic times than by orthodox Hindus in modern India, who look upon the dog as unclean.

Note the delicacy of feeling and expression in the reference to 'breasts.' It represents a strong contrast to classical Sanskrit literature where such delicacy in the treatment of the same subject is not often met with.

(160)

Heaven and Earth

समान्या वियुते दूरे अन्ते

ध्रुवे पदे तस्थतुर् जागरूके ।

उत स्वसारा युवती भवन्ती

आदु ब्रुवाते मिथुनानि नाम ॥ ऋ. ३।५४।७

Partners but parted, with far-off limits,
both stand on one firm place, ever-wakeful;
Sisters, being for ever young,
Speak to each other coupled names. (*R*. III. 54-7).

The Deity of the verses, Heaven and Earth, द्यावापृथिव्यौ is also called Rodasi, रोदसी.

Compare the following description of Heaven and Earth :

अन्या वत्सं भरति क्षेति माता ॥ ऋ. ३।५५।४

One mother rests; another feeds the infant.

[This suggests a fine picture—two mothers sitting side by side : one resting and the other feeding her infant.]

(161)

Day and Night

नाना चक्राते यम्या३ वपूंषि

तयोर् अन्यद् रोचते कृष्णम् अन्यत् ।

श्यावी च यद् अरुषी च स्वसारौ

महद् देवानाम् असुरत्वम् एकम् ॥ ऋ. ३।५५।११

पदे इव निहिते दस्मे अन्तस्

तयोर् अन्यद् गुह्यम् आविर् अन्यत् ।

सध्रीचीना पथ्या३ सा विषूची
महद् देवानाम् असुरत्वम् एकम् ॥ ३।५५।१५

Different each from the other, you Two
have made yourselves twin beauties;
one of the Twain is bright, the other dark.
And yet, these Two, the white and the red, are sisters.
Great is the single divinity of the Gods. (11)
The Two are, as it were, treasured in a wondrous place.
Of the Twain one is hidden, the other manifest.
One common pathway is parted in two.
Great is the single divinity of the Gods. (15)
(R. III. 55).

[The Deity of the verses is Day and Night].

Note the clear and emphatic assertion of the single divinity of Gods. It rules out polytheism altogether.

(162)

Virgin Motherhood

आक्षित् पूर्वास्वपरा अनूरुत्
सद्यो जातासु तरुणीष्वन्तः।
अन्तर्वतीः सुवते अप्रवीता
महद् देवानाम् असुरत्वम् एकम् ॥

ऋ. ३।५५।५

Lying in the old (plants) He grows again in the younger,
quickly in the tender, newly born;
Though they are unimpregnated, He makes them fruitful,
Great is the single divinity of the Gods. (*R.* III. 55-5).

The Deity is Agni, the Divine Energy, inspiring life.

The Christian theory of virgin-birth is obviously derived from the original conception of plant life. The plant, growing up in all freshness from the earth, becomes fruitful. The fruit seems to have only the mother and no earthly father,—to have derived its life from a heavenly Father—the Divine Spirit that vitalises all life.

[The Veda calls this Divine Spirit Agni—the Deity of the verse].

(163)

One Who Stays Flowing Waters

स ईं महीं धुनिम् एतोर् अरम्णात्

सो अस्नातॄन् अपारयत् स्वस्ति ।

त उत्स्नाय रयिम् अभि प्र तस्थुः

सोमस्य ता मद इन्द्रश्चकार ॥ ऋ. २।१५।५

The mighty roaring stream he stayed from flowing,
he carried those, who swam not, safely across,
They having crossed attained to riches,
That Indra did in the Soma's rapture. (*R.* II. 15-5)

[The Deity is Indra]

We are reminded here of the Old Testament account of the crossing of the sea through Divine grace by Moses and his followers.

The next line puts us in mind of a poetic idea found in Vaishnava songs—

सोदञ्चं सिंधुम् अरिणान् महित्वा । ऋ. २।१५।६

With his might he made the streams flow upward.
(R. II. 15-6).

(164)

For Him the Dawn is Lovely

तुभ्यम् उषासः शुचयः परावति

भद्रा वस्त्रा तन्वते दंसु रश्मिषु

चित्रा नव्येषु रश्मिषु ।

तुभ्यं धेनुः सबर्दुघा विश्वा वसूनि दोहते ।

अजनयो मरुतो वक्षणाभ्यो दिव आ वक्षणाभ्यः ॥

ऋ १।१३४।४

For Thee the radiant Dawns in the far-off sky
spread out their lovely garments in wondrous beams,
splendid in their new-born beams ;
For Thee the nectar-yielding cow (cloud) yields all the
treasures ;
The Maruts Thou hast engendered from the wombs, the
heaven's wombs. (R. I. 134-4).

[Here the Deity is Vayu : the Lord of the air].
The metre (अत्यष्टि) is very graceful.

(165)

The Beautiful Troop

विप्रासो न मन्मभिः स्वाध्यो
देवाव्यो ३ न यज्ञैः स्वप्नसः ।
राजानो न चित्राः सुसंदृशः
क्षितीनां न मर्या अरेपसः ॥ १

ग्रावाणो न सूरयः सिन्धुमातर
आदर्दिरासो अद्रयो न विश्वहा ।
शिशूला न क्रिळयः सुमातरो
महाग्रामो न यामन्नुत त्विषा ॥ ६ ऋ. १०।७८

Ye by your hymns are like noble-minded sages;
skilful, inviting Gods as by sacrifice;
Wondrous-looking like kings decked in splendour,
like sinless gallants, leaders of people.
Princes born of the stream, like press-stones,
Like crushing stones that crush all;
Playful like children that have beauteous mothers,
Like a great host marching with splendour.
(*R.* X. 78. 1, 6).

[The Deities are Maruts]

The simile in the seventh line brings a graceful picture of family life before the mind's eye.

(166)

The Sage and the Rivers

"ओ षु स्वसारः कारवे शृणोत
ययौ वो दूराद् अनसा रथेन ।
नि षू नमध्वं भवता सुपारा
अधोअक्षाः सिन्धवः स्रोत्याभिः ॥"

" आ ते कारो शृणवामा वचांसि
ययाथ दूराद् अनसा रथेन ।
नि ते नंसै पीप्यानेव योषा
मर्यायेव कन्या शश्वचै ते ॥ " ऋ. ३।३३।९-१०

The Sage's address to two Rivers :

Sisters! listen to the poet
who has come to you with wagon and car,
Bow lowly down, be easy to cross,
stay, Rivers, with your streams below the axles.

The Rivers reply :

Yes, singer, we will listen to thy words,
because thou comest from far with wagon and car.
I will bend to thee like a nursing mother,
I will yield to thee as a maiden to her lover.
(*R.* III. 33. 9-10).

These two stanzas are taken out of a beautiful ballad of thirteen stanzas (*Rig.* III. 33.)

The beauty of the last two lines is superb.

The opening line of the stanza that precedes expresses confidence in the immortality of the sage's words :

एतद् वचो जरितर् मापि मृष्ठा
आ यत् ते घोषान् उत्तरा युगानि ।

ऋ. ३।३३।८

Forget not, O Singer! this word of thine
which after-ages will resound. (*R.* III. 33-8).

The sage's confidence in the immortality of his words is remarkable.

(167)

Queen of the Forest

आञ्जनगन्धिं सुरभिं
बह्वन्नाम् अकृषीवलाम् ।
प्राहं मृगाणां मातरम्
अरण्यानीम् अशंसिषम् ॥ ऋ. १०।१४६।६

I have praised the Queen of the Forest,
Mother of wild life,
Redolent of balm, sweet-scented,
possessing much food, but lacking tilled land.
(*R.* X. 146-6).

Aranyani, Queen of the forest, received high praise from the sage, not only for her gifts to men but also for her charm.

(168)

Two Beautiful-winged Birds

In the following symbolic verse, the two beautiful-winged Birds have been understood through the ages to refer to the relation between the soul (जीवात्मन्) and the Over-soul (परमात्मन्):

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया
समानं वृक्षं परि षस्वजाते ।
तयोर् अन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्त्य-
नश्नन्नन्यो अभि चाकशीति ॥

ऋ. १।१६४।२०
अ. ९।९।२०

Two beautiful-winged Birds,
knit together (by love), friends,
have found their abode in the same tree.
One of them eats the sweet *pippala* fruit;
the other, that does not eat, overlooks all.
(*R.* I. 164.20; *A.*).

[The verse has been quoted in Upanishads.]

For सुपर्ण—standing for the Divinity—compare *R.* X. 114.5 (No. 64).

(169)

The Tree with Inverted Roots

In the following we find the symbol common in post-vedic literature, of the inverted tree :

अबुध्ने राजा वरुणो वनस्यो-
र्ध्वं स्तूपं ददते पूतदक्षः ।

नीचीनाः स्थुरुपरि बुध्न एषाम्

अस्मे अन्तर्निहिताः केतवः स्युः ॥ ऋ. १।२४।७

In the baseless region, King Varuna,
of hallowed power, holds erect the tree's stem:
Its rays, whose root is high above, stream downward.
May they sink within us, and be hidden.
(*R.* I. 24.7).

Cf. The *Bhagavad Gita* :

ऊर्ध्वमूलम् अधः शाखम् अश्वत्थं प्राहुर् अव्ययम् । १५।१

They have called the Asvattha with roots above and branches below, indestructible.

(170)

The Supreme Sage

सो अङ्गिरोभिर् अङ्गिरस्तमो भूद्

वृषा वृषभिः सखिभिः सखा सन् ।

ऋग्मिभिर् ऋग्मी गातुभिर् ज्येष्ठो

मरुत्वान् नो भवत्विन्द्र ऊती ॥ ऋ. १।१००।४

He, Indra, was the best Angiras among Angirases, being mighty among the mighty, a friend with friends.
The chanter of verse among verse-chanters, the senior-most of singers.
May Indra, at the head of Martus, be our succour.
(*R.* I. 100-4).

According to this style of speech, the Divinity can be spoken of in the superlative degree of any term signifying goodness and nobility.

(171)

The Great Comforter

According to Vedic grammar the superlative suffix is joined not only to adjectives, but also to substantives. In the above we find the superlative in तम; in the following verse it is in इष्ठ (corresponding to English "est").

कया तच्छृण्वे शच्या शचिष्ठो

यया कृणोति मुहुका चिद् ऋष्वः ।

पुरु दाशुषे विचयिष्ठो अंहो
ऽथा दधाति द्रविणं जरित्रे ॥ ऋ. ४।२०।९

By what might is He renowned as the mightiest,
Wherewith the Lofty One makes battle ?
The best Soother of the worshipper's great sorrow,
He gives riches to the singer. (*R.* IV. 20-9).

Here शचिष्ठ, mightiest, and, विचयिष्ठ, the best soother, are superlative terms applied to the Divinity.

[The Deity is Indra]

(172)

The Supreme Being

In the following verse, the opening mantra of the *Rigveda,* the Deity is called the supreme Donor :

अग्निम् ईळे पुरोहितं
यज्ञस्य देवम् ऋत्विजम् ।
होतारं रत्नधातमम् । ऋ. १।१।१

I pray to Agni, the Priest, God of the sacrifice, the Minister of the service,
The Offerer of oblation, the best Giver of treasure.
(*R.* I. 1-1).

Superlative terms applied to the Deity, indicating the supreme state of every value of life, are found scattered over the Vedas. It is important to note that the Deities are named differently—Agni, Indra etc.—but each possesses the supreme quality ; in other words, each Deity represents the Supreme Being in a particular way.

The following are some of the superlative terms :

रत्नधातमः (ऋ. १।१।१)– the supreme giver of treasure (spoken of Agni)

वीरवत्तमः (ऋ. १।१।३)-the greatest leader of heroes (Agni)

पुरुतमः पुरूणाम् (ऋ. १।५।२)– Fullest among the full ; Richest of the rich (spoken of Indra)

रथीतमं रथीनां (ऋ. १।११।१)– Supreme among car-borne heroes (Indra)

यविष्ठ (ऋ. १।२६।२)–Most youthful (Agni)

मंहिष्ठ (ऋ. १।३०।१)–Most liberal (Indra)

अङ्गिरस्तमः (ऋ. १।३१।२)–the supreme Angiras (Agni)

यजिष्ठ (ऋ. १।४४।५)– most adored (Agni)

वेधस्तम (ऋ. १।७५।२)–the wisest (Agni)

वाजसातम (ऋ. १।७८।३)–the best gainer of power (Agni)

वृत्रहन्तम (ऋ. १।७८।४)–the Supreme Vritra-slayer (destroyer of darkness, evil) (Agni)

सुगोपातम (ऋ. १।८६।१)–the best of guardians (Maruts)

जुष्टतमासो नृतमासः (ऋ. १।८७।१) – most beloved and manliest (Maruts)

मन्दिष्ठ (ऋ. १।९७।३)–best praised (Agni)

तवस्तमा (ऋ. १।१०९।५)–mightiest (Indra-Agni)

सहसा सहन्तमः (ऋ. १।१२७।९)- most victorious with conquering strength (Agni)

शुष्मिन्तमः (ऋ. १।१२७।९)– most mighty (Indra)

शंतमः (ऋ. ८।१२८।७) kindest, most blissful (Agni)

ओजिष्ठ (ऋ. १।१२९।१०) strongest (Indra)

सुश्रवस्तमः (ऋ. १।१३१।७) readiest to hear (Indra)

अपसाम् अपस्तमः (ऋ. १।१६०।४) most skilful among the skilled (Creator)

श्रेष्ठः (ऋ. १।१६१।१) best (Ribhu)

(३।२१।३) most excellent (Agni)

अवृकतमः (ऋ. १।१७४।१०) most gentle-hearted (Indra)

इन्द्रतमा (ऋ. १।१८२।२) most Marut-like (Aśvins)

मरुत्तमा (,,)–most Marut-like (Aśvins)

दंसिष्ठा (,,)– most wonderful (,,)

प्रेष्ठ (ऋ. १।१८६।३)–most beloved (Agni)

(६।२६।८)– most beloved (Indra)

तुविष्टमो नरां (ऋ. १।१८६।६) Strongest of heroes (Twashta)

सुरभिष्टम नरां (ऋ. १।१८६।६) Most delightful of heroes (Twashta)

यशस्तमः (ऋ. २।८।५) the most splendid One (Agni)

सतां ज्येष्ठतम (ऋ. २।१६।१) the best of the good (Indra)

तवस्तमस् तवसां (ऋ. २।३३।३) Mightiest of the mighty (Rudra)

भिषक्तमं भिषजां (ऋ. २।३३।४) Best of physicians (Rudra)

अम्बितमे नदीतमे देवितमे (ऋ. २।४१।१६) Motherliest, Best of rivers, Godliest (Sarasvati)

कवितमः (ऋ. ३।१४।१) Best of Poets (Agni)

(ऋ. ५।८५।६) Wisest (Varuna)

नृतम (ऋ. ३।१५।३) Most rich in men (Agni)

„ (ऋ. ३।३२।१७) „ „ „ (Indra)

विप्रतम (ऋ. ३।३१।७) the noblest singer (Indra)

पुरुतम (ऋ. ३।३५।७) Most zealous („)

इनतमः (ऋ. ३।४५।२) Most vigorous („)

वर्षिष्ठम् (ऋ. ३।५६।२) the Highest (All Gods)

पितृतमः पितृणाम् (ऋ. ४।१७।१७) Most fatherly of fathers (Indra)

नृतमः (ऋ. ४।२२।२) Most heroic (Indra)

देवो देवतमः (ऋ. ४।२२।३) Divinest God („)

आगमिष्ठः (ऋ. ४।४३।२) Most quick of movement (Aśvins)

शंभविष्ठः („) Greatest bestower of bliss („)

चेतिष्ठः (ऋ. ५।२७।१) Most famous of nobles (Agni)

वृत्रहन्तम (ऋ. ५।३५।६) Greatest of the slayers of Vritra, the power of darkness (Indra)

„ (ऋ. ८।७४।४) (Agni)

शविष्ठ (ऋ. ५।३८।२) Mightiest (Indra)
दीर्घश्रुत्तम („) Most widely famed („)
कवितमं कवीनाम् (ऋ. ५।४२।३) Sagest of the sages (Savita)
मन्द्रतमः (ऋ. ६।११।२) Most joyous (Agni)
वेधस्तमः (ऋ. ६।१४।२) Wisest (Agni)
सहिष्ठ (ऋ. ६।१८।४) Most potent (Indra)
वरिष्ठ („ ६।३७।४) Supreme (Indra)
मघोनां तुविकूर्मितमः („) Most efficacious of the princes. (Indra)
वृषन्तमः (ऋ. ६।५७।४) Most valiant (Indra)
नेदिष्ठम् आप्यम् (ऋ. ७।१५।१) Nearest kin (Agni)
दीर्घश्रुत्तम (ऋ. ७।८१।५) Most far-famed (Ushas)
मदिन्तम („ ८।१।१९) Best of gladdeners (Indra)
(„ ९।१५।८) (Soma)
शोभिष्ठ („ ८।३।२१) Fairest (Indra)
दस्युहन्तम (ऋ. ८।३९।८) Best slayer of the wicked (Dasyu) —(Agni)
ज्येष्ठं वृषभाणाम् (ऋ. ८।५३।१) Most pre-eminent among heroes (Indra)
पूर्भित्तम (ऋ. ८।५३।१) Greatest breaker of forts (Indra)
मघवत्तम (ऋ. ८।५४।५) Most liberal (Indra)
यजिष्ठ (ऋ. ८।६०।१) Best Priest (Agni)
यविष्ठय (ऋ. ८।६०।४) Most youthful (Agni)
शोचिष्ठ (ऋ. ८।६०।६) Most resplendent („)
स्विदन्तम (८।६४।९) Dearest (Indra)
शिवतम (ऋ. ८।९६।१०) Most beneficent („)
गातुवित्तम (ऋ. ९।४४।३) Best of furtherers (Soma)
मत्सरिन्तम (ऋ. ९।६७।२) Best gladdener (Soma)

प्रथिष्ठ (ऋ. १०।८७।१) Most famous (Agni)

अन्तम (ऋ. १०।१००।६) Most near (Indra)

From the foregoing list of superlatives, culled from the *Rigveda,* it will appear what qualities have been attributed to Divinities in a special way. From this we can also form our opinion about the sense of values of the Vedic poets. Courage and wisdom ; energy, youthfulness, victorious spirit, strength, skill, zeal, quickness of movement and joyousness of soul ; kindness, liberality, love, care of the diseased, affability, gentleness, delightfulness, fatherliness, motherliness, friendliness, goodness, beneficence, opposition to evil, bliss ; beauty, splendour, wonderfulness, adorableness, love of poetry and music, and desire for eminence, fame and wealth (spiritual and material)—these are some of the qualities that have been extolled, and no quality opposed to these has received appreciation.

From this we can construct the Vedic code of life—moral as well as aesthetic.

In popular polytheism gods and goddesses are good as well as bad. In Greek polytheism there are gods that are ugly, disabled and at least partly evil. In Homer, we find Hera speaking to Zeus in very uncomplimentary terms. But the Vedic Gods always stand for the perfection in truth, goodness and beauty, in physical form and in the elementary qualities of energy and valour.

[The Vedic mode of describing the Supreme Being in the superlative like 'Viranam Viratama' (Most heroic of heroes) ; 'Kavinam Kavitama' (Greatest Sage among sages) was followed in Pali in referring to Lord Buddha. He is described as 'Isinam Isisattamo' (Rishinam Rishisattama), 'The Sage among sages' (*Tripitika*).

(173)

The Supreme Lord

त्वं समुद्रो असि विश्ववित् कवे

तवेमाः पञ्च प्रदिशो विधर्मणि ।

त्वं द्यां च पृथिवीं चाति जभ्रिषे

तव ज्योतींषि पवमान सूर्यः ॥ ऋ. ९।८६।२९

Thou art the sea, (vast) ; thou, O Sage! who discoverest all things.
Under thy law are the five regions of the world.
Thou transcendest heaven and earth.
O Self-purifying One! Thine are the lights and Thine the sun. (*R.* IX. 86·29).

The Deity is Pavamana Soma (Soma, self-purifying). He is conceived as the highest Reality. 'Lights' seem to imply stars.

(174)

One Divinity Beyond All Gods

विश्वेदेते जनिमा सं विविक्तो

महो देवान् बिभ्रती न व्यथेते ।

एजद् ध्रुवं पत्यते विश्वम् एकम्

चरत् पतत्रि विषुणं वि जातम् ॥

ऋ. ३।५४।८

All that exists these two (Sky and Earth) keep asunder; though bearing the mighty Devas (Gods), they suffer not.

One All is Lord of what moves and what is fixed, of what walks, what flies, —this multiform creation. (*R.* III. 54·8).

The mighty Devas (Gods) are borne by Sky and Earth; hence they are the splendid phenomena of Nature —in their material aspect. Beyond their splendour there is the One Divine Essence (एकम्) which is also All (विश्वम्) and which lords it over (पत्यते) the world of phenomena.

Herein lies the secret of Vibhuti-yoga. The Vedic sage views the beauty of Nature in two ways; one, material, where the universe shines in splendour; another, spiritual, where he realises the presence of a Divine Power beyond the splendour.

Note the neuter form of "One"—एकम्. Compare :

आनीद् अवातं स्वधया तद् एकं

तस्माद्धान्यन्न परः किं चनास । ऋ. १०।१२९।२

The One breathed air-less by self-impulse,—
Apart from It was nothing whatsoever.

(*R.* X. 129.2).

The use of the neuter gender distinguishes the Vedic conception of One Divine Being or Essence from the usual monotheistic view of one Divine Individual, generally localised and particularised.

Here we find the metaphysical, as distinguished from the theological, approach to the Divine Idea.

The Veda says that all Divine names are adorable :

विश्वा हि वो नमस्यानि वन्द्या

नामानि देवा उत यज्ञियानि वः ।

ऋ. १०।६३।२

All your names, O Gods ! are worthy
of adoration, obeisance and sacrifice.

(*R.* X. 63.2).

It is suggested that the plurality lies only in names, the Divinity is one.

कर्मयोग

THE PATH OF ACTION

CHAPTER V

कर्मयोग

THE PATH OF ACTION

The Path of Action (कर्मयोग) is as important, according to the Vedas, as the Path of Knowledge (ज्ञानयोग). In later religious literature we find a tendency to consider action useless or at best as a necessary evil, but in the Veda's action is accepted as an essential part of life.

Karma-yoga means, primarily, the acceptance of our existence on the material plane. This leads to the building up of the body and the sharpening of the mind and to living a full life with health and vigour and in the joy of being.

Secondly, karma-yoga is accepting the battle of life and fighting it with a will to victory and survival. Survival, in the Vedic sense, does not apply to mere biological existence : it applies also to moral and spiritual life. Hence the battle of life is the battle between good and evil, calling up all that is most energetic and valiant in man to its service. Thus Karma-yoga is based on the Kshatriya spirit and the heroic outlook on life.

The prayer of the Karma-yogin is, therefore, a prayer for health and strength, for a perfect body and long life and for the good things of the earth ; it is also a prayer for valour and power and for victory over all kinds of evil.

The God of the Karma-yogin is the ideal Hero and Warrior. The Vedic Indra is the most typical representation of this conception.

THE PATH OF ACTION I : HEALTH & LONG LIFE

(175)

Prayer for Long Life

तच् चक्षुर् देवहितं शुक्रम् उच्चरत् ।
पश्येम शरदः शतं जीवेम शरदः शतम् ॥ ऋ. ७।६६।१६

May we, for a hundred autumns, see that lustrous
Eye (of the sky, i.e. the sun), God-ordained, arise:
may we live for a hundred autumns.
(*R.* VII. 66.16).

This is an expression of the will to life—a long radiant life. The Veda sets a hundred years as the norm of human life.

(176)

Prayer for a Full Life

The *Yajurveda* expands the idea of the verse :

तच् चक्षुर् देवहितं
पुरस्ताच्छुक्रम् उच्चरत् ।
पश्येम शरदः शतम् जीवेम शरदः शत
शृणुयाम शरदः शतं
प्र ब्रवाम शरदः शतम्
अदीनाः स्याम शरदः शतं
भूयश्च शरदः शतात् ॥ य. (वा) ३६।२४

May we, for a hundred autumns see that lustrous
Eye—God ordained—arise before us;
May we live a hundred autumns;
May we hear for a hundred autumns;
May we speak well for a hundred autumns;
May we hold our heads high for a hundred autumns,
Yea, even beyond a hundred autumns. (*Y.* 36-24).

The *Yajurveda* interprets the Rigvedic verse by saying that living a hundred years is not just dragging on the existence; it is living with the bodily organs in the fittest condition, and living an honourable life, with the head held high. It also adds that hundred years need not be taken literally as the utmost limit of existence, we may live even longer.

(177)

The Complete Life

The *Atharvaveda* reproduces the same idea in the following :—

पश्येम शरदः शतम् ॥१॥
जीवेम शरदः शतम् ॥२॥
बुध्येम शरदः शतम् ॥३॥
रोहेम शरदः शतम् ॥४॥
पूषेम शरदः शतम् ॥५॥
भवेम शरदः शतम् ॥६॥
भूयेम शरदः शतम् ॥७॥
भूयसी शरदः शतात् ॥८॥ अ. १९।६७

May we see through a hundred autumns. (1)
May we live through a hundred autumns. (2)
May we know through a hundred autumns. (3)
May we rise through a hundred autumns. (4)
May we prosper through a hundred autumns. (5)
May we be (remain established) through a hundred autumns. (6)
May we become (grow) through a hundred autumns. (7)
Even more than a hundred autumns. (8)
(*A.* XIX. 63).

Note that in this expanded conception of a complete life, the pursuit of knowledge has been included as an essential requirement (बुध्येम). The word *Buddhi* (बुद्धि) came to mean the highest mental power [cf. *Bhagavad Gita* III 42 :—इन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः। मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिः। *Manas* (Mind) is beyond the senses, and beyond *Manas* is *Buddhi* (Higher Intellect.)

(178)

Prayer for Vision

चक्षुर् नो धेहि चक्षुषे
चक्षुर् विख्यै तनूभ्यः।
सं चेदं वि च पश्येम ॥

ऋ. १०।१५८।४

Give sight to our eyes:
Sight to our bodies so that they can see.
May we see the world as a whole, may we see it in detail.
(*R.* X. 158-4).

Here not only the physical but also the mental sight is prayed for. ('Sam' *i.e.* synthetically, and 'vi' analytically.)

[The Deity is Surya]

(179)

Prayer for All-round Existence

The *Atharvaveda* also expresses the idea of a full life in different words :

वाङ् म आसन् नसोः प्राणश्चक्षुर् अक्ष्णोः श्रोत्रं कर्णयोः ।
अपलिताः केशा अशोणा दन्ता बहु बाह्वोर् बलम् ॥१॥
ऊर्वोर् ओजो जङ्घयोर् जवः पादयोः ।
प्रतिष्ठा अरिष्टानि मे सर्वात्मानिभृष्टः ॥२॥ अ. १९।६०

May I have voice in my mouth, breath in my nostrils,
Sight in my eyes, hearing in my ears,
hair that has not turned grey, teeth that have not decayed,
And great strength in my arms. (1)
May I have power in my thighs, swiftness in my legs, steadfastness in my feet.
May all my members be uninjured and my soul unimpaired. (2) (*A.* XIX. 60).

Here a noble ideal of physical culture has been set up.

(180)

Prayer for Health

वात आ वातु भेषजं
शंभु मयोभु नो हृदे ।
प्र ण आयूंषि तारिषत् ॥

ऋ. १०।१८६।१, सा. १८४,१८४०

May Vata blow His balm on us,
Vata who brings well-being and health to our hearts.
May He lengthen our life. (*R.* X. 186-1; *S.*).

Here Vata (literally, Air) is a symbolic name of God as the Giver of life and health. Non-figuratively, fresh air blows us well-being (शम्), health (मयसे) and life (आयुषे.)

(181)

Full Span of Life

शतमिन्नु शरदो अन्ति देवा
यत्रा नश्चक्रा जरसं तनूनाम् ।
पुत्रासो यत्र पितरो भवन्ति
मा नो मध्या रीरिषतायुर्गन्तोः ॥

ऋ. १।८९।९, य (वा) २५।२२

Verily a hundred autumns lie before us, Gods !
Within which you cause the decay of our bodies ;
Within which the sons become fathers ;
Do not break in the middle the course of our fleeting life.
(*R.* I. 89.9; Y.)

Life should be lived to the full extent—one should **not** die prematurely. Compare :

मा तन्तुश्छेदि वयतो धियं मे
मा मात्रा शार्यपसः पुर ऋतोः ॥ ऋ. २।२८।५

(O Varuna !) Let not my thread (of life),
while I am weaving my song, be torn ;
Nor the measure of my work be broken up before the time.
(*R.* II. 28-5).

(182)

Protection against Old Age

मा नो अग्ने सख्या पित्र्याणि
प्र मर्षिष्ठा अभि विदुष्कविः सन् ।
नभो न रूपं जरिमा मिनाति
पुरा तस्या अभिशस्तेरधीहि ॥

ऋ. १।७१।१०

Break not, O God ! our ancestral friendship,
being One with deep knowledge and a Sage.
Like the (overspreading) cloud, old age impairs the form:
before that evil comes near, protect me.
(*R.* I. 71-10).

[The Deity is Agni]

Compare the following prayer for perpetual **youth.**

अजरासस्ते सख्ये स्याम ।

ऋ. ७।५४।२

O God ! May we be ever-youthful in Thy friendship.

One should not only have long life but also prolonged youth and vigour.

(183)

Protection against Death

मा नो महान्तम् उत मा नो अर्भकं
मा न उक्षन्तम् उत मा न उक्षितम् ।
मा नो वधीः पितरम् मोत मातरं
मा नः प्रियास् तन्वो रुद्र रीरिषः ॥ ऋ. १।११४।७,
य. (वा) १६।१५

Harm not, Rudra, the great or the small among us,
harm not the growing or the fully grown out of us,
Harm not a father or a mother in our midst,
and harm not our beloved bodies. (*R.* I. 114-7; *Y.*)

Rudra, the God of death, is implored to spare men's lives.

Also compare :

ये चिद्धि मृत्युबन्धव आदित्या मनवः स्मसि ।
प्र सू न आयुर् जीवसे तिरेतन ॥ ऋ. ८।१८।२२

As we, men, O Adityas, have death for our comrade,
May you lengthen our days on earth, so that we may live.
(*R.* VIII. 18-22).

The recognition of death by the Vedas as man's comrade (बन्धु) (his unseen companion) marks a most intimate contact with reality. There is no escapist belief that death is an illusion—that it is only sleep, for example.

The term comrade (बन्धु) also suggests an undisturbed, unfearing attitude towards death.

(184)

To Drop Like a Ripe Fruit

त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे
सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।
उर्वारुकम् इव बन्धनात्
मृत्योर् मुक्षीय मामृतात् ॥ ऋ. ७।५९।१२, य. (वा) ३।६०
अ. १४.१.१७

We worship Tryambaka (Rudra)
who spreads fragrance and increases nourishment.
May He release me, like the cucumber from its stem,
from death, but not from immortality.
(*R.* VII. 59-12. *Y. A.*)

Rudra is contemplated here as one endowed with most pleasant qualities. The ideal death is one that comes when Rudra plucks us as ripe fruits from the stem. But death is not the last word, the soul enjoys immortal life.

It is found in the *Yajurveda* (III. 60) that Rudra is lovingly worshipped by maidens, with some interesting changes in this text (See No. 237.)

Rudra's beneficent aspect is illustrated by the following :

नमः सम्भवाय च मयोभवाय च
नमः शङ्कराय च मयस्कराय च
नमः शिवाय च शिवतराय च ॥
य. (वा) १६।४१

Homage to Him who is the source of bliss,
and of well-being,
to the beneficient One (Shankara),
the bestower of happiness,
to the good (Shiva), the surpassingly good.
(*Y.* 16.41).

'Shiva' and 'Shankara' descriptive terms here, became names of Rudra in later ages.

(185)

Accepting Death Without Rejecting Life

इमे जीवा वि मृतैर् आववृत्रन्न्
अभूद् भद्रा देवहूतिर् नो अद्य ।
प्राञ्चो अगाम नृतये हसाय
द्राघीय आयुः प्रतरं दधानाः । ऋ. १०।१८।३, अ. १२।२।२२

These living ones are divided from the dead ;
blessed be our call to God to-day.
We have gone forth for dance and for laughter,
prolonging our lives to further times.
(*Rg.* X. 18-3 ; *A.*)

While death (the subject of this verse) is accepted as a stern reality, it is also emphasised that those who are living should continue to live happy lives up to the maximum expectation, by divine grace. "Dance" and "laughter" symbolise the cheerful outlook on life, typical of the Vedas.

(186)

Life of Freedom

उरु णस्तन्वे ३ तन
उरु क्षयाय नस्कृधि ।
उरु णो यन्धि जीवसे ॥ ऋ. ८।६८।१२

Give freedom for our bodies,
Give freedom for our dwelling,
Give freedom for our life.

[The Deity is Indra]

Uru (उरु) means freedom, wide room for free movement, absence of constraint. Compare—

देवीः षळुर्वीर् उरु नः कृणोत । ऋ. १०।१२८।५, अ. ५।३।६

Ye Six Divine Expanses ! Grant us freedom.

(Six Divine Expanses imply the six quarters— the four directions and upper and lower spaces).

(187)

The Happy Life

इन्द्र श्रेष्ठानि द्रविणानि धेहि
चित्तिं दक्षस्य सुभगत्वम् अस्मे ।
पोषं रयीणाम् अरिष्टिं तनूनां
स्वाद्मानं वाचः सुदिनत्वम् अह्नाम् ॥ ऋ. २।२१।६

O God! bestow on us the best treasures:
the efficient mind, and spiritual lustre,
The increase of wealth, the health of bodies,
the sweetness of speech and the fairness of days.
(*R.* II. 21.6.)

Our days should not be just days, but fair, bright, happy days (सुदिन). सुभग is often a term of address to Divinities.

(188)

Prayer for Wealth

भूर्भुवः स्वः
सुप्रजाः प्रजाभिः स्याम
सुवीरा वीरैः सुपोषाः पोषैः ॥
य. (वा) ८।५३

Earth, Ether, Sky!
May we be rich in off-spring,
rich in heroes, rich in nourishing food!
(*Y.* VIII. 53).

The Veda accepts life in its fullness. It does not reject or neglect what is worldly (ऐहिक), as many religious sects, attached to other-worldly (पारलौकिक) interests, do.

(189)

Strength for All

बलं धेहि तनूषु नो
बलम् इन्द्रानडुत्सु नः ।

बलं तोकाय तनयाय जीवसे

त्वं हि बलदा असि ॥ ऋ. ३।५३।१८

O God! give strength to our bodies, strength to our draught bulls;

strength to our progeny, to our descendants, that they may live;

For Thou (Indra) art the bestower of strength.

(*R*. III. 53-18).

(190)

Health, Life and Light of Intellect

तनूपा ऽ अग्ने ऽ सि तन्वं मे

पाह्यायुर्दा ऽ अग्ने ऽ स्यायुर्मे देहि ।

वर्चोदा ऽ अग्ने ऽ सि वर्चो मे देहि

अग्ने यन्मे तन्वा ऽ ऊनं तन्म ऽ आपृण ॥ य. (वा) ३।१७

Thou God (Agni) art protector of the body: protect my body.

Thou art bestower of long life; bestow on me long life.

Thou art bestower of intellectual brilliance: bestow on me intellectual brilliance.

O God! whatever is wanting in my body, make that up for me.

(*Y*. III. 17).

(191)

Intellectual Brilliance

मयि वर्चो अथो यशोऽथो यज्ञस्य यत्पयः ।

तन्मयि प्रजापतिर् दिवि द्याम् इव दृंहतु ॥ अ. ६।६९।३

In me may there be the brightness of intellect,

and fame, and the power that is in sacrifice;

That may the Lord of creation establish firmly in me like the light in heaven. (*A*. VI. 69-3).

Similar is the prayer for higher intelligence (धी, मेधा). See above Nos. 40-43.

The Path of Action II : Heroism in the Battle of Life

(192)

Prayer for Manliness

इमा ब्रह्मेन्द्र तुभ्यं शंसि
दा नृभ्यो नृणां शूर शवः ।
तेभिर् भव सक्रतुर्येषु चाकन्—
नुत त्रायस्व गृणत उत स्तीन् ॥

ऋ. १०।१४८।४

These holy prayers, O God, to Thee I have sung.
Grant to the men, the strength of men, O Hero!
Be of one mind with them in whom Thou delightest;
And protect the singers and their companions.
(*R.* X. 148-4).

[The Deity is Indra]

(193)

Victorious Wisdom

ये स्था मनोर्यज्ञियास्ते शृणोतन
यद्वो देवा ईमहे तद् ददातन ।
जैत्रं क्रतुं रयिमद् वीरवद् यशस्
तद् देवानाम् अवो अद्या वृणीमहे ॥

ऋ. १०।३६।१०

O Ye who are adorable to man! listen;
Give us Gods! what we pray for:
Victorious wisdom, fame with wealth and with heroes.
We crave today this grace of the Gods. (*R.* X. 36.10).

(194)

Intelligence and Valour

तं नो दात मरुतो वाजिनं रथ
आपानं ब्रह्म चितयद् दिवेदिवे ।

इषं स्तोतृभ्यो वृजनेषु कारवे
सनिं मेधाम् आरिष्टं दुष्टरं सहः ॥

ऋ. २।३४।७

Give us, O Maruts, a good steed in the car,
Effective prayer that keeps up remembrance day by day.
Give food to Your worshippers, and to your bards in battle, give winning intelligence
And valour that is unimpaired and difficult to surpass.
(*R.* II. 34-7).

(195)

Prayer for Conquering Might

एन्द्र पृक्षु कासु चिन् नृम्णं तनूषु धेहि नः ।
सत्राजिद् उग्र पौंस्यम् ॥ साम. २३१.

O Indra ! in each fight and battle
give to our bodies manly strength,
O powerful Lord, give ever conquering might. (*S.* 231)

(196)

The Battle of Life

अश्मन्वती रीयते सं रभध्वम्
उत्तिष्ठत प्र तरता सखायः ।
अत्रा जहाम ये असन्नशेवाः
शिवान् वयम् उत्तरेमाभि वाजान् ॥

ऋ. १०।५३।८
य. (वा) ३५।१०
अ. १२।२।२६

The stream, filled with stones, flows on ;
move together,
Stand erect, and cross over, my friends !
Here let us leave those who are opposed to good ; and
let us cross over to powers that are beneficent.
(*R.* X. 53-8; also *Y.*, *A.*)

Here "the stream filled with stones" implies our life filled with difficulties ; we must hold our heads high, *i.e.*,

conduct ourselves heroically and get over those difficulties. There should be no compromise with powers of evil.

"Move together" implies that people should combine (सम् signifies it) to fight the difficulties.

For "उत्तिष्ठत" "stand erect," compare—

कृधी न ऊर्ध्वान् चरथाय जीवसे

ऋ. १।३६।१४

O God ! make us erect in our walk and our life.

In the *Atharvaveda* there is a variation of the text, but this serves to make the meaning clearer. The *Atharvaveda* verse reads :

अश्मन्वती रीयते सं रभध्वं
वीरयध्वं प्र तरता सखायः ।
अत्रा जहीत ये असन् दुरेवा
अनमीवान् उत्तरेमाभि वाजान् ॥

अ. १२।२।२६

The **stream,** filled with stones, flows on ;
move together, and
quit you like heroes and cross over, my friends !
Leave here those who are evil-minded ;
let us cross over to powers that are beneficent !
(*A.* XII. 2-26).

The changes imply that the *Atharvaveda* understands "Stand erect" in the *Rigveda* to mean "Be heroic," and अशेवा to imply powers of evil, and it paraphrases शिवान् (good) by अनमीवान् (not evil, good).

In a verse following the above, the *Atharvaveda* further quotes the *Rigveda* with explanatory words :—

उत्तिष्ठता प्र तरता सखायो-
ऽश्मन्वती नदी स्यन्दत इयम् ।

अत्रा जहीत ये असन्नशिवाः
शिवान् त्स्योनान् उत्तरेमाभि वाजान् ॥

अ. १२।२।२७

Stand erect! and cross, O friends!
this stony river flows on.
Leave here those that are opposed to good;
let us cross over to powers that are beneficent and pleasant. (*A.* XII. 2-27).

[Here the addition of नदी— river—after the stony (stream)— अश्मन्वती —definitely fixes the meaning of the Rigvedic verse. Again for the archaic रीयते— flows—the modern स्यन्दते is used. Similarly, the archaic अशेवाः is substituted by अशिवाः and the meaning of शिवान् is amplified by the addition of स्योनान् —pleasant.]

In the second line of the couplet following the *Atharvaveda* verse quoted above, there seems to be a paraphrase of the Rigvedic verse:

अतिक्रामन्तो दुरिता पदानि
शतं हिमाः सर्ववीरा मदेम ।

अ. १२।२।२८

Having crossed over troublous places, may we enjoy (ourselves)
with all our heroes for a hundred winters (years). (*A.* XII. 2-28).

(197)

March to Victory

The following is an exhortation, presumably to soldiers, for a march to victory.

प्रेता जयता नर इन्द्रो वः शर्म यच्छतु ॥
उग्रा वः सन्तु बाहवो ऽ नाधृष्या यथासथ ॥

ऋ. १०।१०३।१३ साम. १८६२,
य. (वा) १७।४६, अ. ३।१९।७

Go forward and conquer, ye heroes!
May God give you protection.
Valiant be your arms, so that you may remain unwounded.
(*R.* X. 103 13; also *S.*, *Y.*, *A.*)

The occurrence of the verse in each of the four Vedas indicates its representative character. The most characteristic element in Vedic morals is the heroic outlook.

Note that though divine protection is sought, the fighters are enjoined to protect themselves from injury by valour. God helps the valiant.

(198)
God the Valiant

Vedic morals are found not only in exhorations and prayers but also in the conception of Divinities, perfect beings, whose qualities indicate ideal virtues. In the following verse God (Indra) is contemplated as strong and valiant :

त्वम् इन्द्र बलाद् अधि सहसो जात ओजसः
त्वं वृषन् वृषद् असि ॥

ऋ. १०।१५३।२, सा. १२०, अ. २०।९३।५

O God! Thy existence rests on strength,
valour and energy.
Thou, mighty One! art strong indeed.
(*R.* X. 153-2; also *S.* *A.*)

Here strength (बल) conquering power (सहस्) and energy (ओजस्) are the qualities admired.

(199)
The Leader in Battle

गोत्रभिदं गोविदं वज्रबाहुं
जयन्तम् अज्म प्रमृणन्तम् ओजसा ।
इमं सजाता अनु वीरयध्वम्
इन्द्रं सखायो अनु सं रभध्वम् ॥

ऋ. १०।१०३।६, सा. १८५४,
अ. ६।९७।३ ; १९।१३।६, य. (वा) १७।३८

Cleaver of fortifications,
Victor of earth, armed with thunder,
who defeats an army and with might destroys it;
Follow Him (Indra), brothers! and
Quit yourselves like heroes! and friends!
Move on together after Him.
(*R.* X. 103-6 also the three other Vedas).

[The powerful rhythm of the lines symbolises the heroic idea.]

(200)
God of Victory

अस्माकम् इन्द्रः समृतेषु ध्वजे-
ष्वस्माकं या इषवस् ता जयन्तु ।
अस्माकं वीरा उत्तरे भव-
न्त्वस्माँ उ देवा अवता हवेषु ॥

ऋ. १०।१०३।११, सा. १८५९,
अ. १९।१३।११, य. (वा) १७।४३

Ours be Indra when our flags are gathered;
May our arrows be victorious;
May our heroes prevail in battle;
Ye Gods! protect us in the shout of onset.
(*R.* X. 103-11; also the three other Vedas.)

The following is a prayer to Rudra in the *Yajurveda*:

आशुषेणाय चाशुरथाय च नमः
नमः शूराय चावभेदिने च ।

Our homage to the One who has swift armies and swift chariots,
Homage to the Hero, to Him who rends asunder.
(*Y.* VS. 16.34).

Rudra has also been spoken of as "clad in a robe of skin" (कृत्ति वसान) and bearing his pinaka (bow) (*Y.* VS. 16. 51.). The robe of skin is the costume of the ascetic (cf. कार्ष्णं वसान, 'clad in antelope skin,' a description of the Brahmacharin in A. XI 5.6), and the bow, the weapon of the warrior. So in Rudra (as later in Shiva) are combined the ascetic and the warrior.

With Rudra are also associated many of the qualities of Indra, including martial valour. In later ages Rudra, or Shiva, as he came to be called, became the Patron Deity of warriors, inspired not only by heroism but also by the ascetic spirit of sacrifice. His name Hara (हर) became a battle cry.

(201)

The Ideal Hero

In the following verse the Divinity is described as an ideal hero.

न वीळवे नमते न स्थिराय
न शर्धते दस्युजूताय स्तवान् ।
अज्रा इन्द्रस्य गिरयश् चिद् ऋष्वा
गम्भीरे चिद् भवति गाधम् अस्मै ॥ ऋ. ६।२४।८

He who is being worshipped does not bend before the strong nor before the firm ;
Nor before the arrogant challenger, instigated by the wicked.
For Indra the lofty mountains are as plains ;
For Him even in the deeps there is a ford. (*R.* VI 24-8).

[The Deity is Indra, who symbolises the heroic ideal.]

According to this conception, the ideal hero is indomitable and cannot be over-awed or brow-beaten. Again, his resourcefulness is immense : neither tall mountains nor deep streams can block his way. Metaphorically, even where there seems to be no hope, he finds a way out.

The solemnity of the rhythm adds to the power of the idea.

(202)

Will to Victory

इमा नु कं भुवना शीषधामे-
न्द्रश्च विश्वे च देवाः ॥

ऋ. १०।१५७।१
साम. ४५२, ११७०
अ. २०।६३।१, १२४।४
य. (वा) २५।४६

We will bring these existing words into subjection,
With Indra and all Gods to aid us.
(*R.* X. 257-1; also the other Vedas).

This heroic wish of man to make himself master of the earth is most typical of the Vedas. The verse occurs in all the four Vedas and in two of them, twice.

Similar heroic sentiments are expressed in the following :—

सुवीर्यस्य पतयः स्याम

ऋ. १०।१३१।६

May we be lords of hero vigour!

नृभिर् नृवन्तः स्याम

ऋ. ७।४१।३

May we be rich in heroes.

मा भेम मा श्रमिष्मोग्रस्य सख्ये तव

ऋ. ८।४।७

O God! having received the friendship
of Thee, the valiant,
We will neither fear nor feel weary.

(203)

Prayer for Divine Virtues

तेजो ऽसि तेजो मयि धेहि ।
वीर्यम् असि वीर्यं मयि धेहि ।
बलम् असि बलं मयि धेह्योजोऽस्योजो मयि धेहि ।
मन्युर् असि मन्युं मयि धेहि ।
सहोऽसि सहो मयि धेहि ॥

य. (वा) १९।९

Thou art the fiery spirit, give me the fiery spirit;
Thou art manly vigour, give me manly vigour;
Thou art power, give me power;
Thou art energy, give me energy;
Thou art battle-fury, give me battle-fury,
Thou art conquering might, give me conquering might.
(Y. XIX. 9).

Man wishes to be God-like by developing divine qualities in him.

(204)

The Strong pray to the Strong

वृषा त्वा वृषणं हुवे
वज्रिन् चित्राभिर् ऊतिभिः ।
वावन्थ हि प्रतिष्टुतिं वृषा हवः ॥

ऋ. ८।१३।३३

Strong, I invoke Thee, the Strong,
O Thunderer! with thy manifold graces,
Thou hast received this praise song. Strong is my invocation. (*R.* VIII. 13-33).

Man prays to God (Indra) the valiant, through his own valour.

(205)

Heroic Renown

सामान् नु राये निधिमन्नवन्नं करामहे सु पुरुध श्रवांसि ।
ता नो विश्वानि जरिता ममत्तु
परातरं सु निर्ऋतिर् जिहीताम् ॥

ऋ. १०।५९।२

Here is the hymn for wealth and plentiful food;
let us do many deeds of glory.
May the singer rejoice in these our doings.
Let destruction flee to far-off places. (*R.* X. 59-2).

Here the reference is to deeds of valour which are celebrated by poets in ballads and epics. Hence the prayer is for heroic valour.

(206)
Epic Glory

जयेम कारे पुरुहूत कारिणो
ऽभि तिष्ठेम दूढ्यः
नृभिर् वृत्रं हन्याम शूशुयाम
चाऽवेर् इन्द्र प्र णो धियः ॥

ऋ. ८।२१।१२

May we be victors, O much invoked,
(celebrated) in the songs of poets,
and challenge the wicked ;
May we with heroes smite the power of evil (Vṛitra)
and show forth our strength
O God ! further Thou our intellectual powers.
(*R.* VIII. 21-12)

Ballads and epics celebrated the valour of great heroes. In this verse there is an exhortation for such heroic deeds as would provide a theme for epic poets or ballad singers.

[It is interesting to note that the Vedic word "Kāri" had the same meaning as the Greek word "poet", *viz.*, maker.]

[The Deity is Indra]

(207)
Fearless Life

सख्ये त इन्द्र वाजिनो
मा भेम शवसस्पते ।
त्वाम् अभि प्र णोनुमो
जेतारम् अपराजितम् ॥

ऋ. १।११।२, सा ८२८

Powerful in Thy friendship, O God, Lord of might.
We have no fear.
To Thee we offer our worship, to the Conqueror,
unconquered. (*R.* I. 11. 2, *S.* 828).

To live fearlessly, in the friendship of the Hero of heroes, the never-conquered Conqueror, is the typically Vedic ideal. [The Deity is Indra].

The Path of Action III : Good Life

(208)

Live and Strive

आ रोहतायुर जरसं वृणाना
अनुपूर्वं यतमाना यति ष्ठ ।
इह त्वष्टा सुजनिमा सजोषा
दीर्घम् आयुः करति जीवसे वः ॥

ऋ. १०।१८।६

Accept life, welcoming old age,
all of you striving one behind the other,
May the Deity, Maker of fair things, be gracious and
make long life for you to live. (*R.* X. 18-6).

In the *Atharvaveda* the last line reads :

सर्वम् आयुर् नयतु जीवनाय

अ. १२।२।२४

And lead your whole lives on to full existence.

Here the ideal of a life of action is set. Man should always exert himself (यतमाना). [The Deity is Tvasta].

(209)

Give up Indolence

त्रातारो देवा अधि वोचता नो
मा नो निद्रा ईशत मोत जल्पिः ।
वयं सोमस्य विश्वह प्रियासः
सुवीरासो विदथम् आ वदेम ॥

ऋ. ८।४८।१४

Gods, Preservers ! bless us !
May not sleep control us nor idle talk.
But may we, ever dear to Soma,
with our heroes, speak to the synod. (*R.* VIII. 48-18).

Sleep and idle talk cause much waste of valuable time. Hence the prayer of votaries of active life to save them from these.

(210)

Sloth is Ungodly

इच्छन्ति देवाः सुन्वन्तं
न स्वप्नाय स्पृहयन्ति ।
यन्ति प्रमादम् अतन्द्राः ॥

ऋ. ८।२।१८, सा. ७२१:
अ. २०।१८।६

The Gods desire the man who presses
 the juice (*i.e.*, performs the ritual);
They do not like sleep.
They, the unsleeping, punish dissoluteness.
(*R.* VIII. 2-18; *S.*, *A.*).

The following line conveys a similar idea:

न ऋते श्रान्तस्य सख्याय देवाः ।

ऋ. ४।३३।११

Gods befriend none but him who has toiled.

[For प्रमाद compare the *Bhagavad Gita*:

प्रमादालस्यनिद्राभिस्तन् निबध्नाति भारत (१४।८)

That तमोगुण (inertia) binds by dissoluteness, indolence and sleep; O scion of Bharata!]

Though applying particularly to the performance of the ritual, the verse generally applies to life as a whole.

For अतन्द्राः, unsleeping, compare the *Bhagavad Gita*:

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः (३।२३)

If I had not engaged in action, unsleeping.

(211)

Divine Wakefulness

अस्वप्नजस् तरणयः सुशेवा
अतन्द्रासो ऽवृका अश्रमिष्ठाः ।
ते पायवः सध्र्यञ्चो निषद्या
ऽग्ने तव नः पान्त्वमूर ॥

ऋ. ४।४।१२

O effulgent Deity (Agni), who art unerring,
may Thy protecting powers,
that know no slumber, are speedy and beneficent,
are alert (literally, sleepless), friendly and unwearied,
May they, combined, take their places
here and preserve us. (*R.* IV. 4-12).

(212)

Honest Labour

अक्षैर् मा दीव्यः कृषिम् इत् कृषस्व
वित्ते रमस्व बहु मन्यमानः ।
तत्र गाव· कितव तत्र जाया
तन्मे वि चष्टे सवितायम् अर्यः ॥

ऋ. १०।३४।१३

Do not play with dice; cultivate thy cornfield;
Delight in that wealth, thinking highly of it.
O Gambler! there is thy cattle and there thy wife;—
So the noble Savita has told me. (*R.* X. 34-13).

Here the habit of trying to grow rich by gambling is denounced and honest labour and its gains are recommended.

Here a man is called upon to work in his field with his cattle and run the household with his wife.

(213)

Wealth through the Path of Law

परि चिन् मर्तो द्रविणं ममन्याद्
ऋतस्य पथा नमसा विवासेत् ।
उत स्वेन क्रतुना सं वदेत
श्रेयांसं दक्षं मनसा जगृभ्यात् ॥

ऋ. १०।३१।२

Let a man think well on wealth and strive to win it by the path of Law and by worship:
And let him take counsel with his own inner wisdom, and grasp with spirit still greater ability.

A man should obtain wealth by honest and rightful means, and become progressively efficient (दक्ष) by taking thought with himself. Rita, eternal moral law, should guide all attempts at growing rich.

(214)
Unselfishness

मोघम् अन्नं विन्दते अप्रचेताः
सत्यं ब्रवीमि वध इत्स तस्य
नार्यमणं पुष्यति नो सखायं
केवलाघो भवति केवलादी ॥

ऋ. १०।११७।६

The unwise man obtains foodgrains to little purpose;
I tell you the truth—it is as good as his death.
He feeds neither a friend nor a comrade.
And one who eats all by himself sins all by himself.
(*R.* X. 117.6).

The last line literally means "The lonely (केवल) eater is the lonely sinner."

Life must be lived on altruistic principles. The *Bhagavad Gita*, proposing to interpret the ancient outlook on life—presumably the Vedic (with reference to Prajapati and creation)—says :

भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात्। ३।१३

Those evil people partake of sin who only cook for themselves.

This seems to be a paraphrase of the Rigvedic line.

The word अघ (sin, sinful man) is common to both the passages.

(215)
The Good Path

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान्
विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान्।

युयोध्य १ स्मज्जुहुराणम् एनो
भूयिष्ठां ते नमउक्तिं विधेम ॥

ऋ. १।१८९।१
य. वा. ३।२५, ७।४३, ४०।१६

Agni ! lead us by the right path to well-being ;
Thou God ! who knowest all duties ;
Remove from us the sin that makes us go astray.
We will offer Thee our fullest adoration.
(R. I. 189-1 also Y.).

Here God is prayed to for keeping men in the right path, and taking them out of the path of evil and sin.

(216)

The Right Path

स्वस्ति पन्थाम् अनु चरेम
सूर्याचन्द्रमसाविव ।
पुनर् ददताऽघ्नता
जानता सं गमेमहि ॥ ऋ. ५।५१।१५

We will follow the path of righteousness like the sun and the moon :
We will associate again with the liberal, the kind, the knowing. (R. V. 51-15.).

"Like the sun and moon" implies the absolute regularity in following the law. The strictness with which the sun and the moon follow the natural law should be observed by man in the case of moral law.

Good life requires keeping company of the good. Compare :

विश्वदानीं सुमनसः स्याम ऋ. ६।५२।५
May we be good-hearted all our days. (R. VI. 52.5).

(217)

Rise through Good Life

परि माग्ने दुश्चरिताद् बाधस्वा
मा सुचरिते भज ।

उद् आयुषा स्वायुषोदस्थाम्
अमृताँ २ ऽ अनु ॥

य. (वा) ४।२८

Bar me, O Agni ! against evil conduct,
make me a sharer in good conduct.
I have risen up with life, have risen up with good life,
following the Immortals. (*Y.* IV. 28).

Goodness is divine; to follow the Divinity is also to **tread** in the path of goodness.

(218)

Pursuit of Goodness

भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवा
भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर् यजत्राः
स्थिरैर् अङ्गैस् तुष्टुवांसस् तनूभिर्
व्यशेम देवहितं यद् आयुः ॥

ऋः १।८९।८ सा. १८७४, य (वा) २५।२१

Gods ! may we listen with our ears to what is good,
and, O Holy Ones ! see with our eyes what is good ;
And may we, with firm limbs and bodies,
offering praise-songs to you,
enjoy the divinely ordained term of life
(*R.* I. 89-8 also *S.* and *Y.*)

It is not enough that we should live long, but should also live a good life. Cf.

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः । ऋ. १।८९।१ य (वा) २५।१४

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.
(*R.* I. 89.1 ; *Y.*) (*Cf.* 112).

(219)

Good-will

यज्जाग्रतो दूरम् उदैति दैवं
तद् उ सुप्तस्य तथैवैति ।

दूरङ्गमं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिरेकं
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पम् अस्तु ॥

य. (वा). ३४।१

That which, divine, goes far away from the waking person,
and that goes likewise from the sleeping,
The one light of lights, far-moving,—
may that mind of mine will what is good.
(Y. 34-2).

The foundation of good action is good-will in the mind.

(220)

Good Will

यत् प्रज्ञानम् उत चेतो धृतिश्च
यज्ज्योतिरन्तर् अमृतम् प्रजासु ।
यस्मान्नऽऋते किञ्चन कर्म क्रियते
तन्मे मनः शिवसंकल्पम् अस्तु ॥

य. (वा.) ३४।३

That which is the source of high knowledge, and is the intellect and the power of memory,
that which is the deathless flame within living beings,
Without which no action whatever is performed,
may that mind of mine will what is good. (Y. 34-2).

The Veda goes to the spring of all action—the mind of man—and desires goodness there. If the will that proceeds from the depths of our being be good, then our whole conduct is good.

This subtle, psychological approach to moral conduct is rare even in modern times.

[Note the Vedic words for goodness—सु (su) good (adjective), स्वस्ति (Swasti), righteousness, blissfulness, भद्र (*bhadra*), good, blissful, शिव (*Śiva*), good.]

(221)

Loyalty to a Comrade

यस्तित्याज सचिविदं सखायं
न तस्य वाच्यपि भागो अस्ति ।

यदीं शृणोत्यलकं शृणोति
नहि प्रवेद सुकृतस्य पन्थाम् ॥

ऋ. १०।७१।६

For one who has deserted a wise comrade,
there is no grace even in the holy word (of the scripture) uttered by him.
And if he listens (to the holy word), he listens in vain.
(For) He knows not the path of righteousness.
(*R.* X. 71-6).

Religious conformity is of no value without fundamental morality. Loyalty to a comrade is part of elementary morality.

(222)
What is Religion ?

सत्यं बृहद् ऋतम् उग्रं
दीक्षा तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं धारयन्ति ।
सा नो भूतस्य भव्यस्य पत्न्युरुं लोकं
पृथिवी नः कृणोतु ॥

अ. १२।१।१

Truth, great Law that is stern, consecration, austerity,
prayer and sacrifice (ritual),
these uphold the Earth.
May that Earth, the mistress of our past and future,
make a wide world for us. (*A.* XII. 1.1).

The *Atharvaveda* speaks of the earth as upheld by Dharman (older form of Dharma) : पृथिवीं धर्मणा धृताम् XII. 1-17) and also of these six as upholding the earth. So these six make Dharma.

Of these, the first two—Truth (सत्य) and Order (ऋत) or Eternal Law, are the fundamental principles of moral life [Cf.

ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात् तपसोऽध्यजायत

ऋ. १०।१९०।१

From perfect austerity were born
Eternal Law and Truth (in the beginning of creation)];
consecration (दीक्षा) and austerity (तप:) are the foundation of personal character [Cf. *Yajurveda* : व्रतेन दीक्षाम् आप्नोति । य. (वा) १९।३० 'By self-dedication (*Vrata*) one receives consecration']; and prayer (ब्रह्म, meaning words of prayer, also scripture and scriptural knowledge) and sacrifice (यज्ञ, ritual) make religion in relation to the Divinity.

'That Earth [सा पृथिवी]' means the Earth so upheld by Truth etc. So the Vedas accept the earth and material existence to the fullest extent, but subject to the fundamental moral and spiritual laws. Here is the difference between the positive and 'this-worldly' (ऐहिक) and active (attached to कर्म) outlook of the Vedas, and the exclusively ascetic, negative and inactive (seeking नैष्कर्म्य) attitude of many post-Vedic cults.

(223)

God is Truth

सत्यम् इद् वा उ तं वयम्
इन्द्रं स्तवाम नानृतम् ॥ ऋ. ८।६२।१२

Let us extol this Indra who is truth and not untruth.

युवां देवास् त्रय एकादशास:
सत्या: सत्यस्य ददृशे पुरुस्तात् ॥ ऋ. ८।५७।२

O Asvins ! The three and thirty (Deities) that are Truths, saw you two in front of Truth.
(*R.* VIII. 57-2; Valakhilya 9).

[Cf. सविता सत्यधर्मा (अ. १।२४।१)

God has truth as the law of His being.

Cf. Guru Nanak : एक ओं सत्नाम (जपजी).

There is one Om (Divine Being) whose name is Truth. (Japji)]

(224)

Prayer from Truthful Life

ऋतवाकेन सत्येन श्रद्धया तपसा सुत
इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ।

ऋ. ९।११३।२

O Indu (libation) ! flow towards Indra,
pressed with words of Law, with truth,
with reverence and with pure life (austerity).
(*R.* IX. 113-2).

'Soma' represents the libation offered to God. The libation must be preceded by a life that is truthful in word and deed, and reverent, and controlled by Law (the fundamental moral principle).

श्रद्धा (*Sraddha*) reverence, faith, joined to truth and law, produces the higher spiritual quality in man.

(225)

Straightforwardness of Mind

ऋतं शंसन्त ऋजु दीध्याना
दिवस् पुत्रासो असुरस्य वीराः ।
विप्रं पदम् अङ्गिरसो दधाना
यज्ञस्य धाम प्रथमं मनन्त ॥

ऋ. १०।६७।२

अ. २०।९१।२

Praising the Eternal Law, thinking straight,
sons of Heavens, sons of Light,
Angirases, held the rank of sages
and first observed the statute of sacrifice.
(*R.* X. 67-2).

Angirases, the great Vedic sages, qualified as sages and priests (who could perform rituals) by the two-fold process of attachment to the fundamental moral Law and thinking in a straight and truthful manner.

[The *Bhagavad Gita* mentions आर्जवम्, substantive form of ऋजु straightforwardness—as a divine quality (Ch. 16. 1) and as a means of self-culture (Ch. 17. 14)]. The term implies intellectual honesty.

(226)

Gods, the Protectors of Eternal Law

ता वां विश्वस्य गोपा
देवा देवेषु यज्ञिया
ऋतावाना यजसे पूतदक्षसा ॥ ऋ. ८।२५।१

I worship you who guard the universe,
Gods, holiest among the Gods,
Upholders, of the Eternal Law
whose power is sacred. (*R*. VIII. 25-1).

[The Deities are Mitra and Varuna.]

These Gods specially uphold the Eternal Law. Also compare :—

ऋतस्य मा प्रदिशो वर्धयन्ति
ऋ. ८।१००।४ (See No 136 above)

The Eternal Law's commandments make me (*i.e.*, Indra) mighty.

God has been identified with ऋत—Eternal Law, just as He has been identified with सत्य—Truth. See ऋ. ४।४०।५ [No. 120 above]. Also compare : महि क्षत्रावृतं बृहत् (ऋ.५।६८।१)

These two mighty Lords (Mitra and Varuna) are the great Law. (*R*. V. 68.1).

Also compare *Mahanarayanopanishad* :

तद् एवर्तं [एव ऋतं] तद् उ सत्यम् आहुस् तद् एव ब्रह्म परमं कवीनाम्
That has been called Rita, and that Satya, and that the supreme Brahman of the sages. (1.6).

[ऋत, Eternal Order, (or धर्मन्, eternal statute) came to be known as Dharma (धर्म) in later times signifying the fundamental principles of life. These were accepted for one's conduct, irrespective of one's belief in

the Divinity. It is in respect of this attitude that there is no break with Vedic tradition in Buddhism, Jainism and similar non-conformist cults in India].

(227)

Beauty lies in Eternal Law

ऋतस्य दृळ्हा धरुणानि सन्ति
पुरूणि चन्द्रा वपुषे वपूंषि ।
ऋतेन दीर्घमिषणन्त पृक्ष
ऋतेन गाव ऋतम् आ विवेशुः ॥ ऋ. ४।२३।९

Firm-seated are the foundations of Eternal Law;
in its lovely form are many splendid beauties.
By Eternal Law they give us long-lasting nurture;
by Eternal Law have the worlds entered the universal order. (*R.* IV. 23-9).

The Eternal Law that produces cosmic order also produces the order or symmetry that underlies beauty. Hence Gods (Cosmic Powers) that are upholders of Eternal Law are all beautiful. Man and the world of matter participate in good, beautiful, orderly life by the power of the Eternal Law.

(228)

Happiness through Attachment to Law

To the man who lives according to Law, the earth is full of sweetness, and he seeks to make a heaven of the earth.

मधु वाता ऋतायते
मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः ।
माध्वीर् नः सन्त्वोषधीः ॥ ६ ॥
मधु नक्तम् उतोषसो
मधुमत् पार्थिवं रजः ।
मधु द्यौर् अस्तु नः पिता ॥ ७ ॥

मधुमान् नो वनस्पतिर्
मधुमाँ अस्तु सूर्यः ।
माध्वीर् गावो भवन्तु नः ॥ ८ ॥

ऋ. १।९०
य. (वा) १३-२७-२९

For one who lives according to Eternal Law
the winds are full of sweetness ;
the rivers pour sweets ;
so may plants be full of sweetness for us. (6)
Sweet be the night and sweet the dawns ;
Sweet the dust of the Earth ;
Sweet be our Father Heaven to us. (7)
For us may the forest tree be full of sweets,
full of sweetness the sun,
And full of sweetness the kine for us. (8) (*R.* I. 90 ;Y)

This is Vedic "paganism"—the joy in the earth, but a joy consecrated under the control of Eternal (moral) Law (ऋत).

The Path of Action IV : Domestic Life

Domestic Life (गार्हपत्य or गृहस्थाश्रम) occupies a central place in life according to the Vedas. It is established on love and marriage, the conjugal bond and the family ties.

(229)
The Adventurous Lover

यास्ते पूषन्नावो अन्तः समुद्रे
हिरण्ययीरन्तरिक्षे चरन्ति ।
ताभिर्यासि दूत्यां सूर्यस्य
कामेन कृत श्रव इच्छमानः ॥ ३ ॥
पूषा सुबन्धुर्दिव आ पृथिव्या
इळस्पतिर्मघवा दस्मवर्चाः ।
यं देवासो अददुः सूर्यायै
कामेन कृतं तवसं स्वञ्चम् ॥ ४ ॥ ऋ. ६।५८

O Pushan! thy golden ships travel across the ocean, in the air's mid-region;
With those thou goest on an embassy to Surya, impelled by love, desirous of glory. (3)
Pushan, the good friend of sky and earth, Lord of grace, liberal, of wondrous lustre;
Him, the love-impelled, swift-moving and strong, the Deities gave to Suryā. (4) (*R.* VI. 58).

The natural phenomenon of the golden light of morning is transformed into the lovely allegory of the journey of Pushan in a golden boat across the ocean into the sky, impelled by his love of Suryā, the beautiful daughter of Surya and desirous of winning glory to prove his claim to her hand. The Gods find him worthy of her and give him to her (in marriage).

Note the earliest literary interpretation of the romantic ideal of love: a beautiful and heroic youth and a beautiful and noble lady whom he wins by love and the demonstration of valour in a brave adventure across the ocean and the sky.

Note the Vedic way of taking a wife: the bridegroom approaches the father for his consent.

It may also be pointed out that here the bridegroom is said to be "given to" the bride: a point that establishes the dignified position of the woman.

(230)

Marriage

The Suryā marriage which has served as the symbolical marriage ritual for Hindus for thousands of years keeps up the poetic idea of this conception (*Rigveda*: X. 85-86).

The romantic conception of love is maintained by the mutualness of the love.

सूर्यां यत् पत्ये शंसन्तीं मनसा सविताददात् ॥

ऋ. १०।८५।९

Savita gave Suryā to the bridegroom whom she admired with her heart.

[Here Suryā is said 'to be given' to the bridegroom. This, taken with the verse quoted above, implies equality of the parties in marriage].

The following is the description of the bridal 'procession.'

रैभ्यासीद् अनुदेयी नाराशंसी न्योचनी ।
सूर्याया भद्रम् इद्वासो गाथयैति परिष्कृतम् ॥
चित्तिरा उपबर्हणं चक्षुरा अभ्यञ्जनम् ।
द्यौर्भूमिः कोश आसीद् यद् अयात् सूर्या पतिम् ॥

ऋ. १०।८५। ६-७
अ. १४।१।५,६

The Raibhi metre was her bridal friend,
the Narasamsi hymn her escort home;
Lovely was Suryā's robe,
decorated by the gāthā song.
Thought was the pillow of her couch,
sight was the unguent of her eyes.
Her jewellery was sky and earth
when Suryā to her husband went (*R.* X. 85. 6-7; *A.*)

The abstract analogies for concrete ideas indicate the extremely subtle nature of the thought.

[Those who are accustomed to calling Rigvedic poetry primitive should ponder over such passages which demonstrate a highly sophisticated stage of culture].

(231)

The Marriage Vow

गृभ्णामि ते सौभगत्वाय हस्तं
मया पत्या जरदष्टिर् यथासः ।
भगो अर्यमा सविता पुरंधिर्
मह्यं त्वादुर् गार्हपत्याय देवाः ॥

ऋ. १०।८५।३६
अ. १४।१।५०

I take thy hand (in mine) for good fortune,
that thou mayest live to old age with me,
thy husband;
Gods Bhaga, Aryama, Savita, Purandhi,
have given thee to me to be the mistress of my home.
(*R.* X. 85-36; *A.*)

This marriage vow has united couples in India for thousands of years. "Being mistress of a home"—गार्हपत्य came to imply the living of the ideal domestic life—गृहस्थाश्रम.

(232)

The Wife's Place in her New Home

पूषा त्वेतो नयतु हस्तगृह्या
ऽश्विना त्वा प्र वहतां रथेन ।
गृहान् गच्छ गृहपत्नी यथासो
वशिनी त्वं विदथम् आ वदासि ॥

ऋ. १०।८५।२६
अ. १४।१।२०

Let Pushan take thy hand and conduct thee hence,
May the two Ashvins carry thee in their car.
Go to thy house so that thou mayest be the household's mistress;
A ruler (of the household), thou wilt address the assembly.
(*R.* X. 85.26; *A.*)

The wife's place in the household is an exalted one.

(233)

Bringer of Good Fortune

सुमङ्गलीर् इयं वधूर्
इमां समेत पश्यत ।
सौभाग्यम् अस्यै दत्त्वाया
ऽथास्तं वि परेतन ॥

ऋ. १०।८५।३३, अ: १४।२।२८

Bringer of good fortune is this bride,
come all of you and look at her ;
Wish her full happiness
and then return home. (*R.* X. 85-33 ; *A.*)

Even today the word मङ्गल (good fortune) is associated with the bride at her marriage, and the word सौभाग्य (full happiness, good fortune) carries the technical significance of 'married happiness.' (For example, सौभाग्यवती in Marathi and सुहागन in Hindi mean the woman whose husband is alive. The Hindi form of the word, सुहाग, means also marriage-song, and the husband's love, corresponding to Bengali 'sohaga.')

Here we find a demonstration of the wonderful continuity of Vedic ideology.

(234)

Queen of the Home

सम्राज्ञी श्वशुरे भव
सम्राज्ञी श्वश्र्वां भव ।
ननान्दरि सम्राज्ञी भव
सम्राज्ञी अधि देवृषु ॥

ऋ. १०।८५।४६
अ. १४।१४४।

Be a queen to thy father-in-law
a queen to thy mother-in-law ;
Queen to thy sisters-in-law,
and a queen to thy brothers-in-law.
(*R.* X. 85-46; *A.*)

This is a blessing to the bride.

Cf. जायेदु अस्तम् ऋ. ३।५३।४
A wife, verily, is home.

(235)
Conjugal Unity

समञ्जन्तु विश्वे देवाः
सम् आपो हृदयानि नौ ।
सं मातरिश्वा सं धाता
समुदेष्ट्री दधातु नौ ।

ऋ. १०।८५।४७

May All Devas and the Apas unite our hearts,
May Matarishwa, Dhata, Deshtri all bind us close.
(*R.* X. 85.47).

This is spoken by the bridegroom for his wife and himself.

In the *Atharvaveda* which reproduces the Rigvedic verses, there are additions including the following prayer by the wife :

दीर्घायुर् अस्तु मे पतिर् जीवाति शरदः शतम् ।

May my husband be long-lived, may he live a hundred years. (*A.* XIV. 2.63).

Others pray for the couple :

इहेमाविन्द्र सं नुद
चक्रवाकेव दंपती ।

अ. १४।२।६४

Join this couple, O Indra !
like the chakravaka and his mate.

The husband, addressing the wife, says :

सामाहम् अस्मि ऋक् त्वं द्यौर् अहं पृथिवी त्वम्

I am song (*Saman*), thou art hymn (*Rik*), I am Heaven, thou art Earth. (*A.* XIV. 2.71.).

It is to be noted that the love between husband and wife is expected to be mutual. The loving husband approaches the loving wife. (उशती उशन्तः) ।

ऋ. १०।८५।३७

(236)
A Life-long Union

इहैव स्तं मा वि यौष्टं
विश्वम् आयुर् व्यश्नुतम् ।
क्रीळन्तौ पुत्रैर् नप्तृभिर्
मोदमानौ स्वे गृहे ॥

ऋ १०।८५।४२, अ. १४।१।२२

May you two dwell here ; be not parted ;
enjoy the full span of life,
Playing with sons and with grandsons,
rejoicing in your own home. (*R.* X. 85-42).

The Veda contemplates a monogamous marriage. The Vedic ideal is that of perfect monogamy, the life long companionship of two people. This practice must have been well-established, as is evident from the fact that the Vedic Rishi, seeking comparisons for perfect duality for the Twin Deities, Ashvins, gives, along with the examples of two eyes, two lips etc., that of the married couple :

दम्पतीव क्रतुविदा जनेषु

(*R.* II. 39.2)

like a wise married couple among the people.

(See 159 above)

(237)
Prayer for Wedded Bliss

त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पतिवेदनम् ।
उर्वारुकम् इव बन्धनाद् इतो मुक्षीय मामुतः ॥

य (वा) ३।६०

We worship Tryambaka who spreads fragrance
and finds husbands ;
May he release me, like the cucumber from the stem,
from here, and not from there. (*Y.* III. 60.)

'From here' (इतः) implies the father's and 'from there' (अमुतः) the husband's house.

This is an adaptation of *Rigveda* VII. 51. 12 (No. 184) to suit the wishes of maidens.

In later times Rudra became Shiva (that is also one of His Vedic names) and 'Tryambaka' was one of His names. Even now girls worship Shiva for being blessed with good husbands.*

(238)

Joint Performance of Ritual

या दंपती समनसा

सुनुत आ च धावतः ॥

देवासो नित्ययाशिरा ॥ ऋ. ८।३१।५

O Gods! with constant offerings
husband and wife will with one accord press out and wash the Soma juice (the libation to the Divinity)
(*R.* VIII. 31-5).

(239)

Joint Life

The Veda delights in the happy family in which husband and wife, blessed with sons and daughters, live in mutual concord and enjoy long life and prosperity :

पुत्रिणा ता कुमारिणा

विश्वम् आयुर् व्यश्नुतः ।

उभा हिरण्यपेशसा ॥

ऋ. ८।३१।८

With sons and daughters by their side
May the two enjoy the full span of life,
both decorated with ornaments of gold.
(*R.* VIII. 31-8)

(240)

The Loving Whisper

While describing the action of the bow, the lovers' whisper is referred to.

* Cf. *Aspirations from a Fresh World* by Sakuntala Rao Sastri (Bhavan's Book University), p. 66.

वक्ष्यन्तीवेदा गनीगन्ति कर्णं
प्रियं सखायं परिषस्वजाना ।
योषेव शिङ्क्ते वितताधि धन्वञ्
ज्या इयं समने पारयन्ती ॥

ऋ. ६।७५।३, य (वा) २९।४०

As if desirous of speaking, she presses close to the ear,
holding her beloved friend in her embraces;
Strained on the bow, she whispers like a young woman,—
This Bow-string that preserves (the warrior) in the battle.
(*R.* VI. 75.3; *Y.*).

Here the ideas of the heroism of the Kshatriya and the romanticism of the conjugal (Grihastha) life are inter-mingled. The Vedas give full expression to both. [It is interesting to note that ascetic cults like Buddhism opposed both these ideals.]

(241)

Chastity is Godly

The *Rigveda* gives love and matrimony the most exalted status when it compares the Divinity in respect of purity to the chaste and beloved wife.

अनवद्या पतिजुष्टेव नारी ऋ. १।७३।३

Like the spotless wife beloved of her husband.
(*R.* I. 73-3).

This also implies that chastity in the woman is a godly quality.

(242)

Woman's Glory to Defy Death

इमा नारीर् अविधवाः सुपत्नीर्
आञ्जनेन सर्पिषा सं विशन्तु ।
अनश्रवोऽनमीवाः सुरत्ना
आ रोहन्तु जनयो योनिम् अग्रे ॥

ऋ. १०।१८।७
अ. १२।२।३१
१८।३।५७

Let these women, who are not widows and who have good husbands, enter, anointed with unguent and balm.
Let the women who are tearless, robust and well adorned with jewels,
proceed to the house first. (*R.* X. 18-7; *A.*)

This occurs in the Funeral hymn.

Against bleak death are placed the beauty and glory of womanhood (suggesting motherhood of the future generation).

(243)

Remarriage for a Widow

उदीर्ष्व नार्यभि जीवलोकं
गतासुम् एतम् उप शेष एहि ।
हस्तग्राभस्य दिधिषोस् तवेदं
पत्युर् जनित्वम् अभि सं बभूथ ॥
धनुर् हस्ताद् आददानो मृतस्या-
ऽस्मे क्षत्राय वर्चसे बलाय ।
अत्रैव त्वम् इह वयं सुवीरा
विश्वाः स्पृधो अभिमातीर् जयेम ॥

ऋ. १०।१८।८-९
अ. १८।३।२, १८।२।५९-६०

Go up, O woman! to the world of life;
come, you are lying by one who is lifeless.
You have entered into the relationship of wife to husband of him who takes your hand and woos you.
The bow I have taken from the hand of the dead,
so that it may bring us valour, brilliance and strength.
Here you are, and here may we with heroes triumph
over all who challenge us and fight against us.
(*R.* X. 18. 8-9; *A.*).

The widowed wife is courted by a second suitor who comforts her and promises a noble future. A woman so

courted need not spend a life of miserable widowhood. Life is a hard battle and man and wife together can fight it successfully.

Compare *Atharvaveda* :

या पूर्वं पतिं वित्त्वाथान्यं
विन्दतेऽपरम् ।
पञ्चौदनं च तावजं ददातो
न वि योषतः ॥

अ. ९।५।२७

The woman who, having had a former husband,
thereafter gets another later one,
She and her (new) husband,—these two,
if they give five rice-dishes and a goat, will not be separated.

(A. IX. 5-27).

This indicates the remarriage of a woman.

(244)

Family Concord

The *Atharvaveda* sets a fine ideal of family concord.

सहृदयं सांमनस्यम् अविद्वेषं कृणोमि वः ।
अन्यो अन्यम् अभि हर्यत वत्सं जातम् इवाघ्न्या ॥ १ ॥
अनुव्रतः पितुः पुत्रो मात्रा भवतु संमनाः ।
जाया पत्ये मधुमतीं वाचं वदतु शन्तिवाम् ॥ २ ॥
मा भ्राता भ्रातरं द्विक्षन् मा स्वसारम् उत स्वसा
सम्यञ्चः सव्रता भूत्वा वाचं वदत भद्रया ॥ ३ ॥

अ. ३।३०

I will make you of one heart, of one mind and free from hate.
Love one another as the cow loves the calf she has borne. (1)
Let the son be loyal to the father,
and of one mind with the mother ;
Let the wife speak sweet and gentle words to the husband. (2)
Let not brother hate brother, sister hate sister,
unanimous, united in purpose, speak you words with friendliness. (3) (A. III. 30.)

(245)
Family Unity

The ideal of unity is further interpreted in the hymn :

समानी प्रपा सह वोऽन्नभाग:
समाने योक्त्रे सह वो युनज्मि ।
सम्यञ्चो ऽग्निं सपर्यतारा नाभिम् इवाभित: ॥
अ. ३।३०।६

Let your drink be the same, your food be common ;
I bind you together with one common bond.
United, gather round the (sacrificial) fire ;
Like the spokes of a chariot-wheel round the nave.
(*A.* III. 30-6).

The family offered its daily prayer by congregating round the sacrificial fire in which libations of clarified butter were jointly thrown. This was the Agni-hotra.

(246)
The Home

The Veda considers the home as a sort of heaven on earth.

भोजायाश्वं सं मृजन्त्याशुं
भोजायास्ते कन्या ३ शुम्भमाना ।
भोजस्येदं पुष्करिणीव वेश्म
परिष्कृतं देवमानेव चित्रम् ॥ ऋ. १०।१०७।१०

They adorn the swift steed for the liberal giver,
for the liberal giver the resplendent bride waits ;
His is the home like the lotus-lake, decorated, and wonderful as the divine mansion. (*R.* X. 107-10).

The promises for the bountiful donor indicate the importance of the home and the care with which it was beautified.

Compare :

रासि क्षयं रासि मित्रम् अस्मे
Give us a home, give us a friend. (*R.* II. 11.14).

(247)

Sweet Home

In the following lines the poet wishes his going out of and return to home to be sweet.

मधुमन् मे परायणं
मधुमत् पुनरायनम् ।
ता नो देवा देवतया
युवं मधुमतस् कृतम् ॥

ऋ. १०।२४।६

Sweet be my going forth, and sweet my return (home).
So Ye Twain Gods (Asvins) ! enrich us with sweetness through your divinity. (*R*. X. 24-6).

(248)

Home remembered on Sojourn

येषाम् अध्येति प्रवसन्
येषु सौमनसो बहुः ।
गृहान् उपह्वयामहे
ते नो जानन्तु जानतः ॥

य. (वा.) ३।४२

The home on which man, sojourning, contemplates, in which love abounds,
We call it to welcome us, may it know us who know it. (*Y*. III. 42).

The idea of the sojourning man (प्रवसन्) contemplating on home touches a universal chord and is highly poetic. We also find great beauty in the simple statement that there is much (बहु) love (सौमनस:) in the home.

The Path of Action V : Social order

(249)

Four Limbs of Society

If human society is imagined to be a mighty Person (पुरुष), then his important limbs should represent the important orders of society.

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखम् आसीद्
बाहू राजन्यः कृतः ।
ऊरू तद् अस्य यद् वैश्यः
पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥

ऋ. १०।९०।१२, य (वा) ३१।११,
अ. १९।६।६

The man of knowledge (*Brahmana*) was his mouth,
his arms were made the ruling man (*Rajanya*) ;
His thighs were that which is the man of trade (*Vaishya*),
out of his feet was born the working man (*Sudra*).
(*R.* X. 90-12; *Y. A.*)

Society should consist of men following four broad types of pursuits—learning and culture, politics, trade and labour.

[The Vedas think of types of work, not *castes* i.e. fixed hereditary groups of men].

It is to be noted that the Vedas recognise the dignity of labour by making the labourer an essential part of Purusha, the Divine Person.

(250)

Prayer for a Powerful State

Society becomes powerful when each of these forces fully develops.

आ ब्रह्मन्
ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवर्चसी जायताम्

आ राष्ट्रे राजन्यः शूरऽइषव्योऽतिव्याधी
महारथो जायतां
दोग्ध्री धेनुर् वोढानड्वान्
आशुः सप्तिः
पुरन्धिर् योषा
जिष्णू रथेष्ठाः सभेयो युवास्य
यजमानस्य वीरो जायतां
निकामे निकामे नः पर्जन्यो वर्षतु
फलवत्यो नऽओषधयः पच्यन्तां
योगक्षेमो नः कल्पताम् ॥ य. (वा.) २२।२२

O Brahman, may there be born in this kingdom the wise man (Brahman) illustrious for spiritual knowledge;
may there be born the ruling man (rajanya), heroic, skilful archer, piercing with shafts, mighty warrior;
the cow giving plentiful milk, the ox good at carrying, the swift horse;
[and] the highly intellectual woman.
May there be born to the sacrificer a youthful son, willing victory, best of chariot fighters, worthy of the assembly.
May rain fall as we desire. May our fruit-bearing plants ripen.
May our exertion and rest prosper. (*Y.* 22.22).

(251)

Source of Social Vitality

ब्रह्म जिन्वतम् उत जिन्वतं धियः ऋ. ८।३५।१६
क्षत्रं जिन्वतम् उत जिन्वतं नॄन् ऋ. ७।३५।१७
धेनूर् जिन्वतम् उत जिन्वतं विशः ऋ. ८।३५।१८

Animate the power of knowledge
and strengthen the intellect;
Animate the fighting power
and strengthen the heroes;
Animate the milch cow
and strengthen the masses of people.
(*R.* VIII. 35. 16-18).

The Deities are Aswins. Each of these prayers is followed by the refrain—

हतं रक्षांसि सेधतम् अमीवाः

Slay the trespassers (Rakshases)
and drive away disease.

These verses indicate the original conception of the three *varnas*—Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya, representing, respectively, the cultural, political and economic interests of society.

(252)

Prayer for Threefold Power

In the following the same individual prays for the powers of Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vaishya, all in one :

कुविन् मा गोपां करसे जनस्य
कुविद् राजानं मगवन् ऋजीषिन्
कुविन् म ऋषिं पपिवांसं सुतस्य
कुवित् मे वस्वो अमृतस्य शिक्षाः ॥

ऋ. ३।४३।५

Wilt Thou make me guardian of the people ?
Wilt Thou make me, impetuous Maghavan ! their ruler ?
Wilt Thou make me a Rishi (sage) who drinks Soma-juice ?
Wilt Thou make me master of wealth everlasting ?
(*R.* III. 43-5).

(253)

Prayer for All Classes of Society

रुचं नो धेहि ब्राह्मणेषु
रुच ँ राजसु नस्कृधि ।
रुचं विश्येषु शूद्रेषु
मयि धेहि रुचा रुचम् ॥

य. (वा.) १८।४८

Give lustre to our men of holy lore (Brahmanas),
give lustre to our kingly men (Kshatriyas),
give lustre to commoners (Vaishyas), and working men (Sudras) ;
give, through lustre, lustre to me. (Y. 18-48).

Here lustre or intellectual and spiritual brilliance is sought for all sections of the people. (The Deity is Agni)

(254)

Guardians of Social Law

ऋतावाना नि षेदतुः
साम्राज्याय सुक्रतू
धृतव्रता क्षत्रिया
क्षत्रम् आशतुः ॥ ऋ. ८।२५।८

Upholders of Eternal Law, exceedingly powerful,
They have set themselves down for sovereignty ;
Valiant heroes, whose laws stand fast,
They have obtained the guardianship (of the earth).
(*R*. VIII. 25.8).

This is spoken of Mitra and Varuna, guardians of cosmic law ; it also applies to social law, of which the earthly king is guardian. Therefore the kingly man—राजन्य—has been described as a Kshatriya (क्षत्रिय).

The *Yajurveda* applies these descriptive terms to the king [य. (वा.) १०।२७].

Elsewhere the *Yajurveda* invokes Mitra and Varuna to inspire the king in his task :

मित्रः सत्यो वरुणो धर्मपतीनाम् ॥
य. (वा.) ९।३९

May Mitra quicken thee (the king) for truth and Varuna for the guardian sway.

(255)

'Swarajya'

प्रेह्यभीहि धृष्णुहि
न ते वज्रो नि यंसते ।

इन्द्र नृम्णं हि ते शवो
हनो वृत्रं जया अपो
ऽर्चन्ननु स्वराज्यम् ॥

ऋ. १।८०।३
सा. ४१३

Go forward, be bold, and fight!
Thy thunderbolt cannot be subdued.
Indra! manliness is Thy strength,
Strike the power of evil, win the waters,
after acclaiming Thy own royal sway. (*R.* I. 80-3; *S.*)

This address to the Deity, the ideal Hero, also applies to the hero-man. He should make manliness his strength, he should bravely fight evil, win what is good (symbolised by 'waters') and declare 'swarajya'—his own self-rule on the earth.

Indra's thunderbolt symbolises the power coming out of justice (ऋत) and truth (सत्य).

(256)
The King's Task

स्वराड् असि सपत्नहा
सत्रराड् अस्यभिमातिहा
जनराड् असि रक्षोहा
सर्वराड् अस्यमित्रहा ॥

य. (वा.) ५।२४

Self-ruler art thou, conquering foes;
ruler forever art thou, conquering aggressors;
Ruler of the people art thou,
destroyer of wicked powers;
all-ruler art thou, destroyer of enemies. (*Y.* V. 24).

The king's essential task is to fight the evil forces of the world and enforce the law of justice. The following aim of kingship is described in *Yajurveda*—

रक्षसां त्वा वधाय

य. (वा.) १।३८

We enjoin thee to destroy wicked powers (Rakshases).

In this respect the king shares the function of Indra, the slayer of Vritra (Symbolic Power of evil) :

इन्द्रस्य वार्त्रघ्नम् असि

य. (वा.) १०।८

Thou art Indra's Vritra-slaying weapon (referring to the new king's bow).

त्वयायं वृत्रं वधेत्

य. (वा) १०।८

With thee (the bow) may this man (*i.e.*, the king) kill Vritra (the Power of evil). (*Y.* 10.8).

The Kshatriyas, guardians of the people, are champions of right against wrong. Their daily task is to fight and subdue the wicked :

अभि ष्याम रक्षसः

ऋ. १०।१३२।२

May we subdue the wicked. (*R.* X. 132.2).

रणं कृधि रणकृत् सत्यशुष्मा

ऋ. १०।११२।१०

Fight, warrior, strong in truth. (*R.* X. 112.10).

मा नो दुःशंस ईशता ऋ. १०।२५।७

Let not the wicked rule us. (*R.* X. 25.7).

(257)

The Dasyu—Power of Lawlessness

The power of wickedness is called दस्यु in the Vedas, God is the destroyer of the Dasyu ;

स वज्रभृद् दस्युहा भीम उग्रः

ऋ. १।१००।१२

He is the holder of the thunderbolt, destroyer of the Dasyu (wicked), fearful and mighty. (*R.* I. 100. 12).

He is दस्युहन्तम — (ऋ. १०।१७०।२) — the Supreme Destroyer of the Dasyu.

The 'Arya' is one who lives by Truth and Law; the Dasyu is the lawless inhuman being :

अकर्मा दस्युर् अभि नो अमन्तुर्
अन्यव्रतो अमानुषः ।
त्वं तस्यामित्रहन् वधर्
दासस्य दम्भय ॥ ऋ. १०।२२।८

The Evil-doing Dasyu is around us, senseless,
keeping false laws, inhuman :
O Slayer of the foe, baffle the weapon of the Dasa.
(*R.* X. 22-8).

Elsewhere the Dasyu is called

अन्यव्रतम् अमानुषम्
अयज्वानम् अदेवयुम् ऋ. ८।७०।११

Followers of evil laws, inhuman, riteless, Godless.

(258)
Subdue Malignity

The Kshatriya ideal requires uncompromising and unrelenting opposition to the powers of evil :

अभिवृत्य सपत्नान्
अभि या नो अरातयः ।
अभि पृतन्यन्तं तिष्ठा-
ऽभि यो न इरस्यति ॥ ऋ. १०।१७४।२
अ. १।२९।२

Subduing our antagonists, subduing all malignities,
Withstand the man who menaces,
Withstand the man who teases us. (*R.* X. 174-2; *A.*)

(The King is addressed).

(259)
War-fury

The power of fighting evil has been called मन्यु, Wrath, in the Vedas. The following is addressed to Manyu.

अग्निरिव मन्यो त्विषितः सहस्व
सेनानीर्नः सहुरे हूत एधि ।
हत्वाय शत्रून् वि भजस्व वेद
ओजो मिमानो वि मृधो नुदस्व ॥

ऋ. १०।८४।२
अ. ४।३१।२

Flashing like fire, O conquering Wrath !
be Thou invoked, O Victor ! as our army's leader !
Slay our enemies, divide their possessions,
Showing forth thy valour, scatter those who assail us.
(*R.* X. 84-2; also *A.*)

(260)

Aryanise the World

इन्द्रं वर्धन्तो अप्तुरः
कृण्वन्तो विश्वम् आर्यम्
अपघ्नन्तो अराव्णः ॥

ऋ. ९।६३।५

May the active be glorifying God,
Aryanising all,
driving away the lawless. (*R.* IX. 63-5).

To Aryanise people is to bring them under the sway of moral law. The lawless, who are too inhuman for being Aryanised or civilised, should be expelled.

The Veda is uncompromising in its opposition to evil.

(261)

The Righteous War

The warrior fighting for a righteous cause is blessed in the following terms :

मर्माणि ते वर्मणा छादयामि
सोमस्त्वा राजामृतेनानु वस्ताम् ।
उरोर् वरीयो वरुणस्ते कृणोतु
जयन्तं त्वानु देवा मदन्तु ॥

ऋ. ६।७५।१८
साम १८७०
य. (वा) १७।४९
अ. ७।११८।१

Thy vital parts I cover with the coat of mail;
May King Soma clothe thee in immortality:
May Varuna make thee more than sufficient
and in thy triumph may the Gods rejoice.
(*R.* VI. 75-18 and the other Vedas).

The Gods will rejoice only in the triumph of a good cause. Hence the last portion of the prayer implies that the warrior should fight for a right cause.

(262)

Oppose the Destroyer even if a Kinsman

The agent of evil and our enemy must be opposed and conquered, whether he is our own by race or a foreigner. Hence the righteous war is not what is known as "religious war, *i.e.*, war against followers of other religions; the righteous war can be waged against our own kith and kin.

यो नः स्वो अरणो
यश्च निष्ट्यो जिघांसति ।
देवास् तं सर्वे धूर्वन्तु
ब्रह्म वर्म ममान्तरम् ॥

ऋ. ६।७५।१९
सा. १८७२

Whatever enemy wants to kill us,
whether he is a stranger or one of us,
May All Gods discomfit him.
My prayer is the coat of mail within me.
(*R.* VI. 75-19 also *S.*)

The *Samaveda* adds a half-line after the last:

शर्म वर्म ममान्तरम् ॥

[And] Divine Grace is the coat of mail within me.

The problem of Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* whether a kinsman, ranged against him in the battlefield, should be fought against, had been solved in the Veda. It is, however, interesting to find the *Bhagavad Gita* fully supporting the Vedic attitude. Shri Krishna chastises the weak sentimentality of Arjuna as something un-Aryan, अनार्य, presumably upholding the Vedic conception of the Arya as a man who stands up for *dharma* and relentlessly fights *adharma.*

कुतस्त्वा कश्मलम् इदं विषमे समुपस्थितम् ।
अनार्यजुष्टम् अस्वर्ग्यम् अकीर्तिकरम् अर्जुन ॥
भ. गी. २।२

Whence has this dejection overtaken thee
in this perilous strait—
a dejection that is un-Aryan,
un-heavenly, infamous, O Arjuna !

The Ramayana also establishes this principle. When Sita says to Rama :

न कथञ्चन सा कार्या गृहीतधनुषा त्वया ।
बुद्धिर् वैरं विना हन्तुं राक्षसान् दण्डकाश्रितान् ॥ ९।२४-५

In no circumstances, should you, wielding your bow, take a resolution to slay without enmity the Rakshasas in the Dandaka forest :

Rama replies : क्षत्रियैर् धार्यते चापो नार्तशब्दो भवेद् इति ।
ते चार्ता दण्डकारण्ये मुनयः संश्रितव्रताः ॥ १०।३-४
(अरण्यकांड)

The bow is borne by Kshatriyas so that there may be no cry of distress.
These ascetics in the Dandaka forest, devoted to spiritual exercises, are in distress (on account of the Rakshasas).

With the Kshatriya it is not simply personal grievance that calls him to arms, but all cases of suffering of the good at the hands of the wicked do so. Unrelenting opposition must be directed against the latter.

This is in keeping with the Vedic conception.

(263)

The People's Representative

The ruler over the people is their representative. The *Rigveda* speaks of the people electing their king.

विशो न राजानं वृणाना:

ऋ. १०।१२४।८

Like people who elect their ruler. (*R.* X. 124-8).

The ruler must be acceptable to the people.

विशस् त्वा सर्वा वाञ्छन्तु
मा त्वद् राष्ट्रम् अधि भ्रशत् ॥

ऋ. १०।१७३।१

Let all the people desire thee ;
Let not thy kingdom fall away.

(*R.* X. 173-1).

The king derives his power from the people :

इन्द्रोऽसि विशौजा

(य. वा. १०।२८)

Thou art Indra, thy strength lying in thy people.

The following passage carries the same idea :

(264)

The King and the People

अस्मे वोऽअस्त्विन्द्रियम्
अस्मे नृम्णम् उत क्रतुर्
अस्मे वर्चांसि सन्तु वः ।
नमो मात्रे पृथिव्यै
नमो मात्रे पृथिव्यां ऽइयं ते राड्
यन्तासि यमनो ध्रुवोऽसि धरुण: ।
कृष्यै त्वा क्षेमाय त्वा रय्यै त्वा पोषाय त्वा ॥

य. ९।२२

In us may there be your power,
in us your valour, your wisdom,
in us be your mental splendour.
Obeisance to Mother Earth,
Obeisance to Mother Earth !
This is thy sovereignty.
Thou art the controller, ruler,
Thou art steady, firm.
Thee for culture of the land,
Thee for peace, thee for wealth,
Thee for nurture. (Y. 9.22)

The king is addressed here by the people consecrating him. It is in them that his power, vigour, wisdom and light lie. Mother Earth signifies the country in particular.

The following verse deals with the function of the leaders of society in relation to the state.

(265)

The Well-being of all the People

मनो मे तर्पयत वाचं मे तर्पयत प्राणं मे तर्पयत
चक्षुर्मे तर्पयत श्रोत्रं मे तर्पय-
तात्मानं मे तर्पयत प्रजां मे तर्पयत
पशून् मे तर्पयत गणान् मे तर्पयत
गणा मे मा वितृषन् ॥

य. (वा.) ६।३१

Satisfy my mind, satisfy my speech, satisfy my vital power, satisfy my eye, satisfy my ear, satisfy my spirit, satisfy my progeny, satisfy my herds, satisfy my people, let not my people thirst. (Y. 6. 31).

This is a prayer of a king.

The king defends and unites the people :

अथा नऽइन्द्रऽइद् विशो ऽसपत्नाः समनसस्करत ॥

य. (वा.) ७।२५

So now may Indra verily make the people free from foes, and all of one mind.

(266)

The Watchman of the State

वाजस्येमं प्रसवः सुषुवेऽग्रे सोमं
राजानम् ओषधीष्वप्सु ।
ता ऽअस्मभ्यं मधुमतीर् भवन्तु
वयं राष्ट्रे जागृयाम पुरोहिताः स्वाहा ॥

य. ९।२३

O Agni, the furtherance of strength led forward this King Soma in the plants and waters.
Let these be full of sweetness for us.
We, in the state, being stationed in the front, shall remain wakeful. Hail! (Y. 9. 23).

The leaders of Society will keep constant vigilance over the State, being placed in the front rank of citizens. The king is the ruler, but it should be enlightened rule guided by the leaders of the people.

[These verses precede the Rajasuya sacrifice.]

(267)

Subjects of a Greater King

विश ऽएष वोऽमी राजा
सोमो ऽस्माकं ब्राह्मणानां राजा ॥

य. (वा.) ९।४०

O people! This is your King.
Soma is King over us, followers of divine knowledge (Brahmanas). (Y. 9-40).

This is part of a prayer in the *Rajasuya Yajna.*

The spiritual men recognised no earthly King: their only King was God.

The word 'Brahmana' does not imply a caste in the Vedas. Brahmanas, upholders of sacred wisdom and performers of sacred rites, were generally sages (Rishis). In later times Sannyasis have claimed this privilege of independence of the state and kingly sway.

(268)

The Popular Assembly

The Vedas speak of the Sabha, a people's assembly, as part of the constitution of the State. There are also other popular bodies like the *Vidatha, Samiti, Samana*, etc. A good ruler and a good citizen have to be *Sabheya* (सभेय), worthy of taking part in the assembly.

The *Rigveda* speaks of the importance in society of the man who carries the day in the assembly :

सर्वे नन्दन्ति यशसागतेन
सभासाहेन सख्या सखाय: ।
किल्बिषस्पृत् पितुषणिर् ह्येषाम्
अरं हितो भवति वाजिनाय ॥

ऋ. १०।७१।१०

All friends rejoice in the friend who comes with glory, having triumphed in the assembly !
He, verily, is their protector from evil, provider of food ; fit is he for deeds of vigour. (*R.* X. 71-10).

Cf. बृहद् वदेम विदथे सुवीरा:

Loud may we speak with brave men in assembly.
(*R.* IX. 86.48 and elsewhere).

(269)

The Ideal Citizen

सोमो धेनुं सोमो अर्वन्तम् आशुं
सोमो वीरं कर्मण्य ददाति ।
सादन्यं विदथ्यं सभेयं
पितृश्रवणं यो ददाशद् अस्मै ॥

ऋ. १।९१।२०, य. (वा) ३४।२१

To him who makes the offering, the Deity (Soma) gives the milch-cow, He gives the fleet steed,
And He gives the hero-son,
who is fit for work,
fit for home, fit for the (social) assembly, fit for the (political) council,
and a glory to his father. (*R.* I. 91.20 Y. 34-21)

Here the ideal son desired by the father **is described.** He is *Karmanya* (कर्मण्य) capable of *karma* or work; *Sadanya* (सादन्य), fit for *sadana,* the household, capable of discharging domestic responsibilities; *Vidathya* (विदथ्य), fit for *vidatha,* the assembly—a gathering of the people which is social and religious in nature, hence capable of discharging his duties to the community or social group of which he is a member; and *Sabheya* (सभेय), fit for *sabha,* the political body guiding the king in administration, conduct of warfare etc., hence, fit to perform political duties to his state. Finally, he brings glory to his father by his character and achievements and so he is *pitrisravana* (पितृश्रवण).

Hence the ideal citizen has primarily to be a man capable of work, and then he must do his duties in widening spheres of action—to his household, his society and his state.

(270)

Harmony of Wisdom and Valour

यत्र ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च सम्यञ्चौ चरत: सह ।
तँल्लोकं पुण्यं प्रज्ञेषं यत्र देवा: सहाग्निना ॥

य. (वा.) २०।२५

That world I would know where spiritual power (*brahma*) and ruling power (*kshatra*) move together in harmony,
and where Gods with Agni dwell. (Y. 20.25).

The combination of the ruler and philosopher, of valour and wisdom, has been an ideal preached by thinkers of later ages too.

The *Yajurveda* also prays—

ब्रह्म द ँ ह क्षत्रं द ँ ह

य. (वा.) ६।३

Strengthen knowledge, strengthen valour.

(271)

Social Unity

सं गच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ।
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे संजानाना उपासते ॥२॥
समानो मंत्रः समितिः समानी समानं मनः सह चित्तम् एषाम् ।
समानं मन्त्रम् अभि मंत्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥३॥
समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः
समानम् अस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥४॥

ऋ. १०।१९१
अ ६।६४।१-३

Assemble ; speak with one another ;
Let your minds be of one accord.
As ancient Gods unanimous enjoy their due portions.
May your aim be common,
your assembly common ;
Common the mind, and the thoughts of these united.
A common purpose do I lay before you ;
and worship with your common oblation.
Common be your aim, and your hearts united ;
Your mind be one so that all may happily live together.
(*R.* X. 191. 2-4; *A.*)

The *Atharvaveda* supplies a variant of the first line by way of—one may say—explanation :

सं जानीध्वं सं पृच्यध्वम्

अ. ६।६४।१

Agree and hold together.

(272)

God is Common to All

यच्चिद्धि शश्वताम् असीन्द्र साधारणस्त्वम् ।
तं त्वा वयं हवामहे ॥

ऋ. ४।३२।१३, ८।६५।७

As, O God ! Thou art for ever the common Lord of all alike.
As such we invoke Thee now. (*R.* IV. 32-13, VIII. 65.7).

Also compare—

समानम् इन्द्रम् अवसे हवामहे

ऋ. ८।९९।८

We invoke for our succour Indra who is the common Friend of all.

(273)

Hate not the Foreigner

अर्यम्यं वरुण मित्र्यं वा
सखायं वा सदमिद् भ्रातरं वा ।
वेशं वा नित्यं वरुणारणं वा
यत् सीमागश् चकृमा शिश्रथस् तत् ॥

ऋ. ५।८५।७

If, Varuna, we have sinned against the man who loves us, or against a friend,
Or a comrade for ever, or a brother,
Or against a neighbour who is always with us or against a stranger,
From that sin may Thou release us. (*R.* V. 85.7)

Here the prayer is for forgiveness of sins against the stranger as well as the neighbour.

Note also :

य: संदेश्यो वरुणो यो विदेश्य: अ. ४।१६।८

Varuna who is of our own land, and also of foreign land. (*A.* IV. 16-8).

(274)

Vedas for All

The Veda states that its words are for all mankind, not to be limited to any group or nationality. A sage says :

यथेमां वाचं कल्याणीम्
आवदानि जनेभ्य: ।
ब्रह्मराजन्याभ्यां

शूद्राय चार्याय च

स्वाय चारणाय च । यजु. २६।२

So may I speak these blessed words to the people at large:
to the Brahmana and the Kshatriya,
to the Sudra and the Vaishya;
to my own people and to the foreigner. (Y. 26. 18).

(275)

Universal Friendship

Vedic universality requires man to establish friendship with the whole universe, with all other beings:

मित्रस्य मा चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षन्ताम् ।

मित्रस्याहं चक्षुषा सर्वाणि भूतानि समीक्षे ।

मित्रस्य चक्षुषा समीक्षामहे ॥ यजु. ३६।१८

May all beings look on me with the eye of a friend;
may I look on all beings with the eye of a friend;
may we look on one another with the eye of a friend.
(Y. 26.2).

(276)

Freedom from Fear

Friendship leads to fearlessness and peace and works for universal happiness:

अभयं मित्राद् अभयम् अमित्राद्

अभयं ज्ञाताद् अभयं पुरो यः ।

अभयं नक्तम् अभयं दिवा नः

सर्वा आशा मम मित्रं भवन्तु ॥ अ. १९।१५।६

May I be fearless of the friend, fearless of the foe;
fearless of the known, fearless of the unknown;
May our nights be without fear, our days without fear.
May all the directions be my friends. (*A.* 19. 15-6)

(277)

The Beautiful Earth

Finally we must accept the earth with its joys and sorrows, its clashes and conflicts and live as its lords:

यस्यां गायन्ति नृत्यन्ति भूम्यां मर्त्या व्यैलबाः।
युध्यन्ते यस्याम् आक्रन्दो यस्यां वदति दुन्दुभिः।
सा नो भूमिः प्र णुदतां सपत्नान् असपत्नं
मा पृथिवी कृणोतु ॥ अ. १२।१।४१

May the Earth—the Earth whereon men sing and dance with various noise,
Whereon men meet in battle, and the war-cry rises and the drum resounds,
May she subdue my foemen and make me free from foes.
(*A.* 12. 1-41).

(278)

The Free Man on a Fine Earth

गिरयस्ते पर्वता हिमवन्तो
ऽरण्यं ते पृथिवि स्योनम् अस्तु
बभ्रुं कृष्णां रोहिणीं विश्वरूपां
ध्रुवां भूमिं पृथिवीम् इन्द्रगुप्ताम्।
अजीतोऽहतो अक्षतोऽध्यष्ठां पृथिवीम् अहम् ॥
अ. १२।१।११

O Earth, pleasant by thy hills and snow-clad mountains and thy wood-lands!
On the Earth—brown, black, ruddy and of all colours—the firm Earth, the Earth protected by the Deity (Indra),
Upon this Earth I—unconquered, unslain, unwounded, have set my foot. (*A.* XII. 1-11).

(279)

Earth's Inhabitants

The earth is not for the races of men alone but for other creatures also.

त्वज् जातास् त्वयि चरन्ति मर्त्यास्
त्वं बिभर्षि द्विपदस् त्वं चतुष्पदः।
तवेमे पृथिवि पञ्च मानवा

येभ्यो ज्योतिर् अमृतं मर्त्येभ्य
उद्यन् त्सूर्यो रश्मिभिर् आतनोति ॥

अ. १२।१।१५.

Born of Thee, on Thee move mortal creatures;
Thou bearest them—the biped and the quadruped;
Thine, O Earth, are the five races of men, to whom mortals, Surya (Sun), as he rises spreads
with his rays the light that is immortal. (*A.* XII. 1-15).

(280)

Earth's Variety

The earth does not belong to a single race, but to different races, speaking different languages.

जनं बिभ्रती बहुधा विवाचसं
नानाधर्माणं पृथिवी यथौकसम् ।
सहस्रं धारा द्रविणस्य मे दुहां
ध्रुवेव धेनुर् अनपस्फुरन्ती ॥

अ. १२।१।४५

May the Earth that bears people speaking varied language,
With various religious rites according to the places of abode,
Enrich me with wealth in a thousand streams
Like a milch-cow that never fails. (*A.* XII. 1-45).

This recognition of the variety of language and ritual lies at the bottom of the catholic outlook of the Vedic religion. It has aimed at creating unity in variety, and not uniformity. That is how different tribes and classes of people, living at different stages of civilisation, including primitive tribes, have developed on their own lines, under the benevolent and uplifting influence of the Vedic religion. The higher they rose, the more thorough was the assimilation into Vedic spiritual, moral and intellectual culture.

(281)

Concord with the Universe

द्यौः शान्तिर् अन्तरिक्ष ँ शान्तिः
पृथिवी शान्तिर् आपः शान्तिर् ओषधयः शान्तिः ।
वनस्पतयः शान्तिर् विश्वे देवाः शान्तिर् ब्रह्म शान्तिः
सर्व ँ शान्तिः शान्तिर् एव शान्तिः
सा मा शान्तिर् एधि ॥ य. (वा.) ३६।१७
अ. १९।९।१४

Peace of sky, peace of mid-region, peace of earth, peace of waters, peace of plants.
Peace of trees, peace of All-Gods, peace of Brahman, peace of the universe, peace of peace ;
May that peace come to me ! (*Y.* 36-17 also *A.*)

(282)

The Dying Sage

वायुर् अनिलम् अमृतम् अथेदं भस्मान्त ँ शरीरम् ।
ओ ३म् क्रतो स्मर । क्लिबे स्मर । कृत ँ स्मर ॥
य. (वा) ४०।१५

May my breath reach the everlasting air ! Then let my body end in ashes.
Om ! Mind ! remember, remember my sphere ; remember my deeds. (*Y.* 40. 15).

The Veda realised the duality of body and spirit and knew that in death the body was destroyed. So the wise sage serenely contemplates the burning of the body to ashes. The deeds of this life are to direct the course of the future existence of the soul.

(283)

Immortality in Heaven

यत्र ज्योतिर् अजस्रं
यस्मिन् लोके स्वर् हितम् ।

तस्मिन् मां धेहि पवमाना–
ऽमृते लोके अक्षित
इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥७॥
यत्रानन्दाश्च मोदाश्च
मुदः प्रमुद आसते ।
कामस्य यत्राप्ताः कामास्
तत्र माम् अमृतं कृधी–
न्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥११।

ऋ. ९।११३

Place me, Pavamana, in that deathless, undecaying world
where there is everlasting lustre,
wherein the light of heaven is set.
Flow, Indu, for Indra's sake. (7).
Make me immortal there
where joys and transports,
happiness and delights exist,
Where the best of desires are fulfilled.
Flow, Indu, for Indra's sake. (11). (*R.* IX. 113)

Heaven, according to the Vedic conception, is a place of light and joy.

Indu is the Soma juice offered in worship.

The Path of Action VI : Ritual (कर्मकांड)

(284)

Four Ways with the Scripture

The Veda speaks of four different ways in which people deal with the Vedic text :

ऋचां त्वः पोषमास्ते पुपुष्वान्
गायत्रं त्वो गायति शक्वरीषु ।
ब्रह्मा त्वो वदति जातविद्यां
यज्ञस्य मात्रां वि मिमीत उ त्वः ॥

ऋ. १०।७१।११

One plies his constant task, reciting the verses;
One sings the sacred psalm in Sakvari measures;
Another, the master of knowledge, imparts the knowledge of being;
and still another lays down the rules of sacrifice.
(*R.* X. 71-11).

Here the four types of men deal with the Veda in four different ways: one recites the poetry, a second sings it, a third speaks of the knowledge contained in it and a fourth arranges a ritual. Hence to recite the Veda, to sing it, to realise and propagate the knowledge of it and to perform rituals through it—these were the different activities undertaken by followers of the Vedas. These tasks have also been given to different priests in a *Yajna*.

(285)

Popularisation of the Holy Word

यज्ञेन वाचः पदवीयमायन्
ताम् अन्वविन्दन् ऋषिषु प्रविष्टाम् ।
ताम् आभृत्या व्यदधुः पुरुत्रा
तां सप्त रेभा अभि सं नवन्ते ॥
ऋ. १०।७१।३

With sacrifice the steps of the sacred Word (Vak) they followed, and discovered it harbouring within the Rishis (sages);
Having acquired it, they dealt it out in many places, and the seven singers intone it in concert.
(*R.* X. 71-3).

It was through Yajna that the holy word of the Veda was widely circulated. Thus, what would have remained a secret possession of the sages was recited in tunes before the public. [The 'seven singers' are believed to refer to the seven common Vedic metres. The *Atharva Veda* enumerates these:

गायत्र्यु १ ष्णिग् अनुष्टुब् बृहती पङ्क्तिस् त्रिष्टुब् जगत्यै
अ. १९।२१।१

To Gayatri, Ushnik, Anushtup, Brihati, Pankti, Tristhup and Jagati. (*A.* XIX. 21-1).]

(286)

Blessed Rites

भद्रो नो अग्निराहुतो
भद्रा रातिः सुभग भद्रो अध्वरः ।
भद्रा उत प्रशस्तयः ॥ ऋ. ८।१९।१९
साम. १११, १५५९
य. (वा.) १५।३८-३९

Blissful be Agni, invoked by us;
Blissful the divine bounty;
Blissful be our sacrifice, O gracious One!
And blissful our songs of praise.
(*R.* VIII. 19-19; also *S.* and *Y.*)

The special effect of the ritual is that it creates an atmosphere of holiness and bliss.

Mark the grave rhythm of the lines.

(287)

The Well Oared Ship

सुत्रामाणं पृथिवीं द्याम् अनेहसं
सुशर्माणम् अदितिं सुप्रणीतिम् ।
दैवीं नावं स्वरित्राम् अनागसम्
अस्रवन्तीम् आ रुहेमा स्वस्तये ॥

ऋ. १०।६३।१०
य (वा)२१।६,
अ. ७।६।३

(We invoke) the Earth that well protects us,
Heaven that is incomparable,
and Aditi who gives perfect refuge and is a good guide.
The heavenly ship, well oared, faultless, unleaking,
we will ascend for our bliss. (*R.* X. 63-10; *Y.*, *A.*)

The ship implies the ritual which, faultlessly performed, is expected to take the worshipper across the sea of troubles.

That the ship stands for the yajna seems to be made clear by the following criticism of the Vedic ritual in an Upanishad :

प्लवा ह्येते अदृढा यज्ञरूपा

Verily they are frail rafts—these sacrifices.
(*Mundakopanishad,* I. 2.7.)

Here 'frail rafts' is evidently used in contrast with the Vedic claim that the ritual is a 'heavenly ship.'

The Vedas, however, do not dogmatise about the ritual as the following mantras will show.

(288)
New Rites

ब्रह्मा कृणोति वरुणो
गातुविदं तम् ईमहे ।
व्यूर्णोति हृदा मतिं
नव्यो जायताम् ऋतं ॥
वित्तं मे अस्य रोदसी ॥ ऋ. १।१०५।१५

Varuna makes songs of prayer ;
We worship Him who finds the path.
He reveals the hymn in the heart.
Let the rite be born anew.
[O Heaven and Earth know this !] (*R.* I. 105.15)

(289)
Improve the Ritual

That the ritual is a changing thing is stated in the Veda :

त्वं नो अग्ने सनये धनानां
यशसं कारुं कृणुहि स्तवान: ॥
ऋध्याम कर्मापसा नवेन
देवैर् द्यावापृथिवी प्रावतं नः ॥ ऋ. १।३१।८

Thou, O Agni, for the treasuring of riches
make the singer famous—Thou highly lauded ;
May we improve the rite with new performance.
O Heaven and Earth ! with the Gods, protect us.
(*R.* I. 31-8).

'May we improve the rite (कर्म) with new performance'—clearly means that —the ritual, is never permanent; in fact, it is the duty of the worshipper to improve it from time to time.

(290)

Right Life a Preparation for Religious Rite

Again no ritual is worth one's while unless the person performing it comes spiritually prepared for it—with a pure body, a pure heart, and a clean life: a life lived according to moral and spiritual law (व्रत). The Dasyu is *avrata*—unholy in life.

ऋतं वदन्नृतद्युम्न
सत्यं वदन् त्सत्यकर्मन्।
श्रद्धां वदन् त्सोम राजन्
धात्रा सोम परिष्कृत
इन्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥

ऋ. ९।११३।४

Declaring the law, splendid by law,
declaring truth, truthful in act,
Declaring reverence, O Soma, King!
By Thy Creator Thou art decorated.
May Indu flow towards Indra. (*R.* IX. 113-4).

(291)

The Evil-doer unfit for Ritual

प्रत्नान् मानाद् अध्या ये समस्वरन्
छ्लोकयन्त्रासो रभसस्य मन्तवः।
अपानक्षासो बधिरा अहासत
ऋतस्य पन्थां न तरन्ति दुष्कृतः ॥

ऋ. ९।७३।६

Those that from ancient seats manifested themselves—
the guides of song and counsellors of movement,
From these the eyeless and the deaf have turned aside.
The evil-doers travel not the path of Eternal Law.
(*R.* IX. 73-6).

The guides are literally 'lights', 'the wise sages.' The spiritually blunt ('eyeless', 'deaf'), ignore them. But, for such is not the path of Rita (ऋत)—the Eternal Law of life, and the Holy Law of worship—yajna (यज्ञ). The sacred rite is not for the spiritually eyeless and deaf or for the immoral and the wicked. The path of worship is the path of goodness. "Rita" as truth, goodness, justice, must precede "Rita" as sacrifice.

(292)

Keep out the Licentious

न यातव इन्द्र जूजुवुर्नो
न वन्दना शविष्ठ वेद्याभि: ।
स शर्धद् अर्यो विषुणस्य जन्तोर्
मा शिश्नदेवा अपि गुर् ऋतं न: ।   ऋ. ७।२१।५

No wicked ones, O Indra! have impelled us,
nor fiends, O Thou most mighty! with their devices;
May the Noble One subdue the hostile crowd;
May not the lewd approach our rituals. (*R.* VII. 21-5).

(293)

The Man Dear to God

न तं जिनन्ति बहवो न दभ्रा
उर्वस्मा अदिति: शर्म यंसत् ।
प्रिय: सुकृत् प्रिय इन्द्रे मनायु:
प्रिय: सुप्रावी: प्रियो अस्य सोमी ॥   ऋ. ४।२५।५

Him neither the many nor the few overcome;
Aditi will give spacious shelter to Him;
Dear is the well-doer to Indra, dear the devout,
dear the zealous, dear the offerer of oblation.
(*R.* IV. 25.5).

Ritual must be backed up by good deeds and devotion.

(294)

Atonement for Sins

देवकृतस्यैनसोऽवयजनम् असि
मनुष्यकृतस्यैनसोऽवयजनम् असि
पितृकृतस्यैनसोऽवयजनम् अस्यात्म-
कृतस्यैनसोऽवयजनम् अस्येनसऽएनसोऽ वयजनम् असि ।
यच्चाहम् एनो विद्वाँश्चकार यच्चाविद्वाँस्तस्य सर्वस्यैनसोऽवयजनमसि

य (वा)८।१३

Thou art atonement of sin against God,
Thou art atonement of sin against men,
Thou art atonement of sin against the Fathers,
Thou art atonement of sin against myself,
Thou art atonement of every sort of sin.
Of all the sin that I have committed knowingly and that I have committed unknowingly, thou art atonement. (*Y.* 8. 13).

Here we find the typical sin-consciousness. The nobility of the moral ideal deserves special attention. The sin of which the worshipper feels guilty is not only sin against the Divinity, but also against men,—all men, and not only against those who belong to his creed. The Vedas speak of mankind as a whole. (See also No. 273). It is also interesting to note the attempt to atone for the sin against oneself. This indicates a highly developed personality and a refined ethical outlook. A lot of the piety of the so-called religious men is self-torture or self-humiliation—sin against themselves! At any rate, this sort of prayer is almost unique. Again, there is strict intellectual honesty in the desire for atonement of sins committed unknowingly.

"Thou" seems to be some piece of wood (समिध्) thrown into the fire while performing the yajna, symbolising—as in Karma Kanda—the desire to burn away the sin. But more than the ritual, it is the psychology of sin-consciousness here that is interesting.

[The mantra has been quoted in *Mahanarayanopanishad,* 59.1].

The sage Dadhichi also is said to have made this type of sacrifice. Indra is said to have made his thunder-bolt of the bones of the sage, which made him invincible :

इन्द्रो दधीचो अस्थभिर् वृत्राण्यप्रतिष्कुत: ।

जघान नवतीर् नव ॥

The resistless Indra, with the bones of Dadhichi,
slew nine and ninety Vritras (powers of evil).
(*R.* I. 84.13; *S.* 179, 913; *A.* XX. 41.1)

(299)

The Divine Ground

ईशा वास्यम् इदं सर्वं
यत् किं च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा
मा गृध: कस्य स्विद् धनम् ॥१॥
कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि
जिजीविषेच् छतं समा: ।
एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति
न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥२॥ य.(वा) ४०।१–२

Understand all this as inhabited by the Lord,
each moving thing in this moving world.
Thus renounced, enjoy ; covet not any one's possession.
Yea, performing actions here,
desire to live a hundred years.
Thus for thee ; and not otherwise than this,
Action does not cleave to man. (*Y.* 40. 1-2)

The *Yajurveda* which is chiefly concerned with sacrifices (rituals) has this in its concluding chapter. Here we find the typical attitude of the Vedas towards form and spirit—that spirit is supreme but form too is desirable, and the futility of mere formalism is avoided by perpetual spiritual wakefulness. There is also insistence on the other typically Vedic attitude that life is to be lived in its fullness, and the life of action is as much a part of the highest mode of life as the life of contemplation, and that action does not drag the spirit to a

lower level of existence. Thus there is equal insistence on Jnanayoga and Karmayoga. (The word 'karma' in the above context implies both action and ritual.)

The *Bhagavad Gita* paraphrases the last portion of the extract by saying :

कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते

Acting he is not besmirched. (V. 7).

(The fortieth chapter of the *Yajurveda* has been taken separately as an Upanishad and named after the initial words—Ishopanishad.)

(300)

How the Veda was propagated

सप्त स५ं सदो अष्टमी भूतसाधनी
सकामाँ २ अध्वनस् कुरु
संज्ञानम् अस्तु मेऽमुना ॥
यथेमां वाचं कल्याणीम् आवदानि जनेभ्यः ।
ब्रह्मराजन्याभ्या ५ं शूद्राय चार्याय च
स्वाय चारणाय च ।
प्रियो देवानां दक्षिणायै दातुर् इह भूयासम्
अयं मे कामः समृद्धताम् ।

य. (वा) २६।१-२

बृहस्पते अति यद् आर्यो अर्हाद् द्युमद् विभाति क्रतुमज् जनेषु ।
यद् दीदयच्छवस ऋतप्रजात तद् अस्मासु द्रविणं धेहि चित्रम् ॥

य. (वा) २६।३; ऋ.२।२३।१५

Lord of the seven communities and the eighth comprising all beings,
make the pathways pleasant,
and may there be concord between me and that,
So may I speak these blissful words to the masses of men,
to the Brahmana and the Kshatriya,
to the Shudra and the Vaishya,
to my own people and to the foreigner ;

And may I be dear to the Gods, and to the donor of the holy gift,
and may this desire of mine be fulfilled. (Y. 26. 1-2).
Brihaspati, born of Eternal Order, give us that wonderful treasure with which the good man excels, which, consisting of brilliance and wisdom, shines among the people,
And is effulgent with power. (Y. 26. 3; *R.* II. 23. 15).

The sage in the Yajurveda, while going out far on his mission to 'speak the sacred word of the Veda' to the known classes and groups of men and to those living outside these classes and groups, at home and abroad, offers this prayer. And he prays through a Rigvedic mantra to Brihaspati or Brahmanaspati, Lord of Vedic knowledge, for the gift of the greatest treasure—the intellectual and spiritual power which will qualify him for his task. It should be noted that the sage's missionary activity is not backed by secular authority or an institution. He is to be supported by holy gifts offered by people to instructors and priests. The desire of the sage to be 'dear to the Gods' (देवानां प्रियः) reminds us of Emperor Asoka who, ages after described himself in these very terms in his stone edicts, instructing his people in good life. (Asoka honoured the Vedic tradition by always mentioning the 'Brahmana', interpreter of Vedic religion before the 'Śramana', the Buddhistic monk).

We may compare with this passage the Rigvedic account (in X. 136) of the spiritual activities of the Muni, also a sage, who, in his 'soiled yellow garb' and being divinely inspired (देवेषितः), becomes a comrade of Gods in doing good work, and has his missionary adventure in far away places, difficult of access to men :

अप्सरसां गन्धर्वाणां मृगाणां चरणे चरन् ।
केशी केतस्य विद्वान् त्सखा स्वादुर् मन्दिन्तमः ॥

ऋ० १०।१३६।६

Treading the path of Apsarases, Gandharvas and wild beasts,
The Muni, with his locks of hair, comes to know men's hearts, as a sweet friend, most gladdening.
(*R*. X. 136.6)

The Vedic sages gave no name to their religion, for they did not preach a set form of creed, but a spiritual and moral ideal and a culture and a character-pattern of which they themselves were the model. And so they came to share their spiritual discovery and their moral discipline with vast masses of mankind at home and abroad. It is no wonder that the Veda calls them 'world-builders' (भूतकृत्, *e. g.*, *A*. VI. 133.4). They built so strongly that their spiritual edifice has stood firm for thousands of years.